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No.31 AUGUST 1986
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ZX SPECTRUM

ISSUE N0. 31 August 1986

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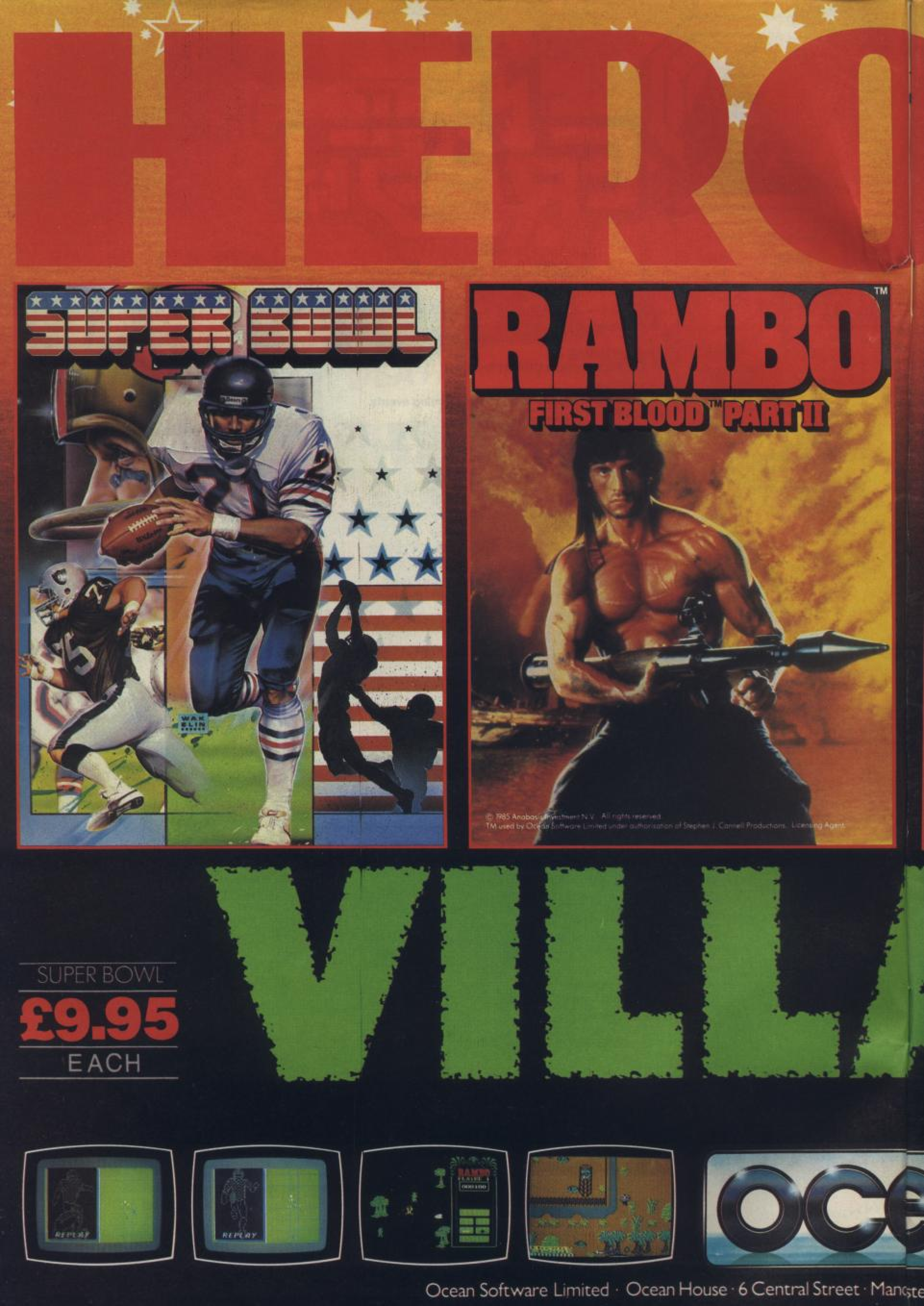
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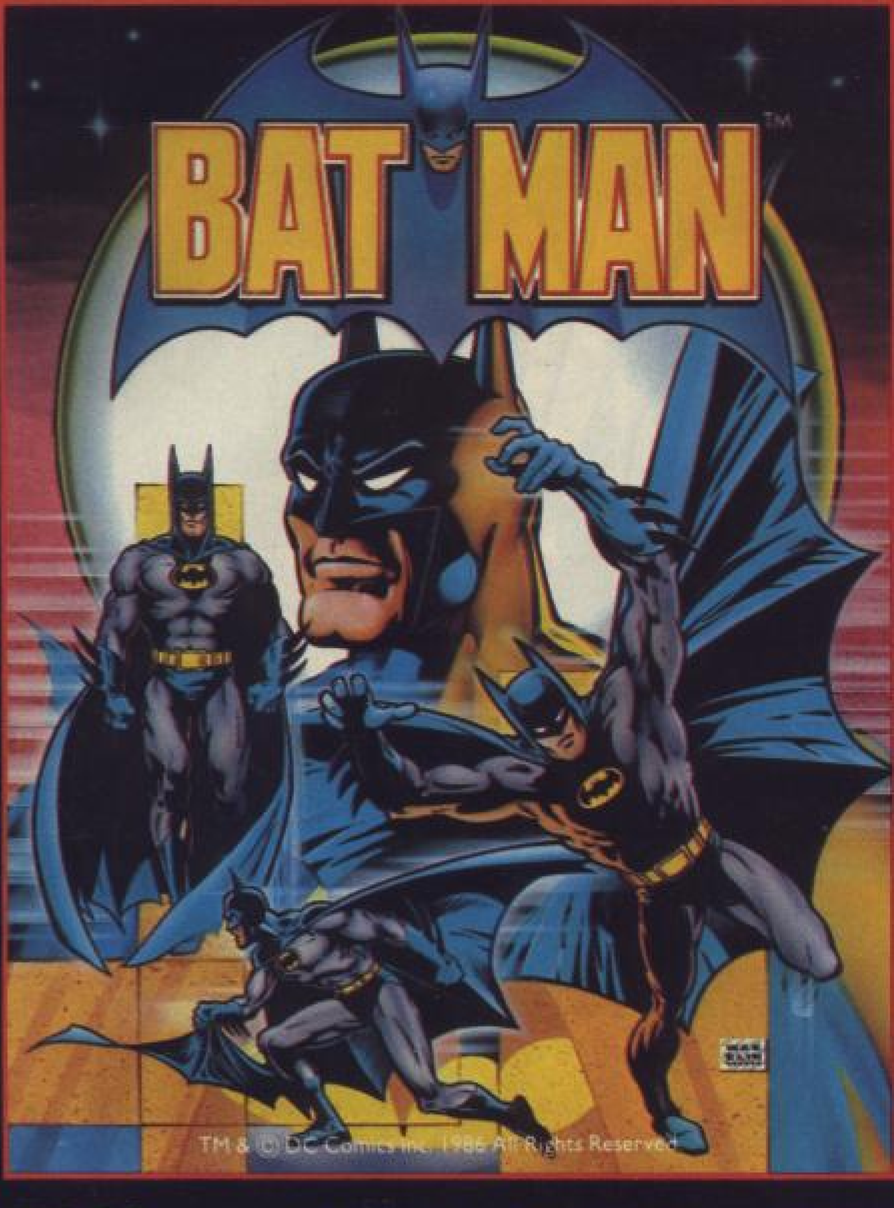
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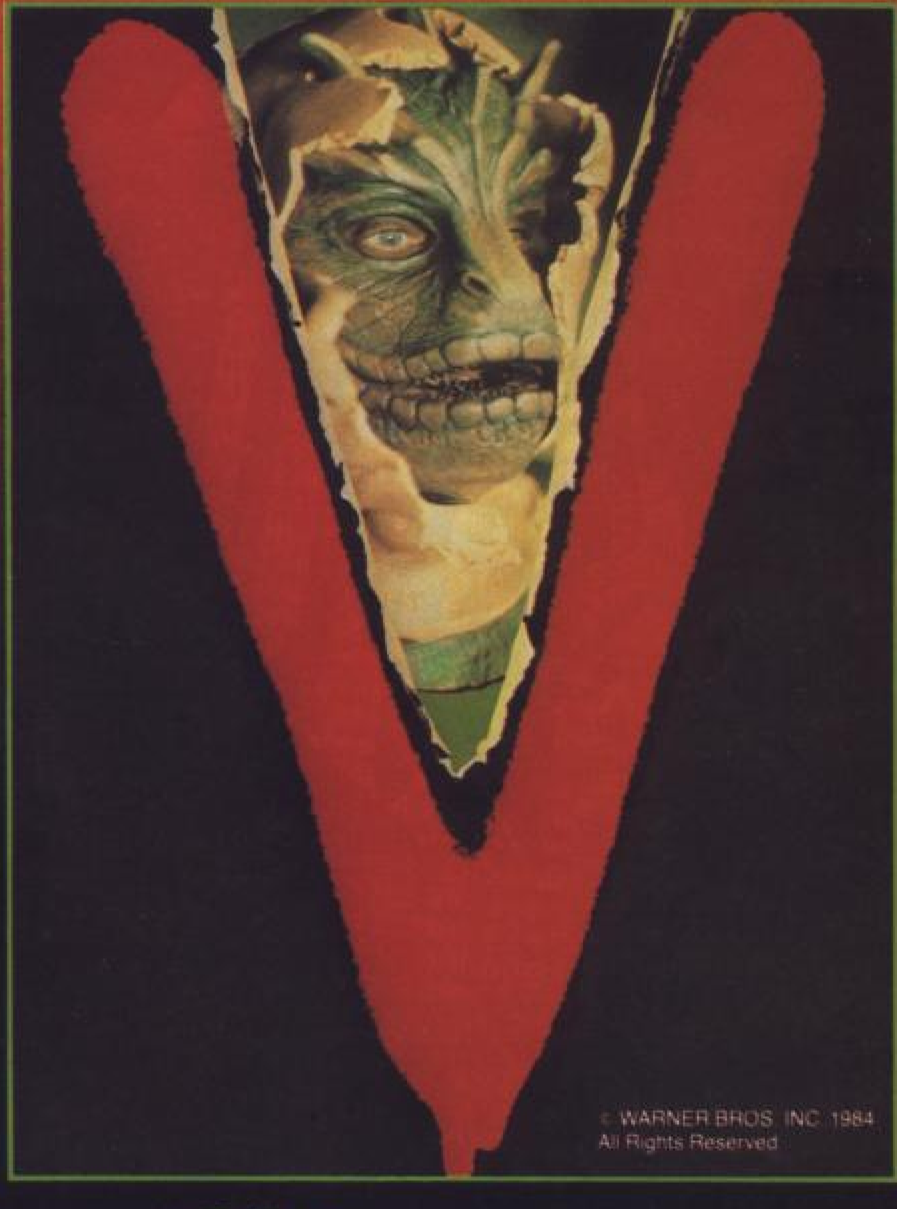
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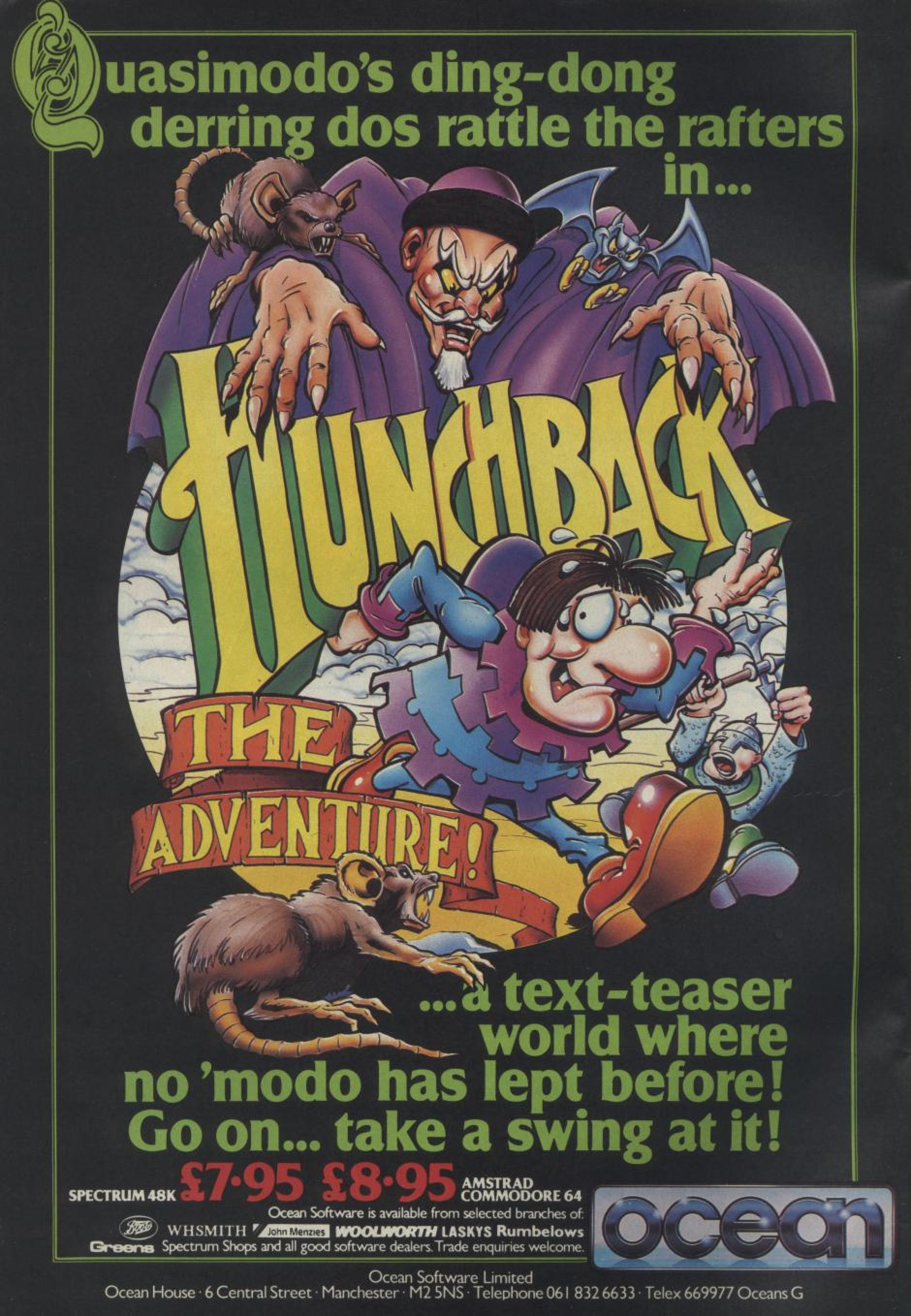






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CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM

Things are really on the move here at Chateau Newsfield — both literally and figuratively. Auntie Aggie and Guru Denise and the rest of the Mail Order crew are on the verge of moving out of CRASH Towers into another set of offices in the town which they will be sharing with a new magazine.

A new magazine? Well yes, Lloyd has finally negotiated a pay rise with the Powers That Be and lends his name to a new publication — LM — which you will be among the first people in the country to see. The first issue is going to be given away with the Christmas Special this year. We've already planned to have 196 pages in the Christmas CRASH, so if your eyesight's a bit dicky, make sure you've got a set of reading glasses sorted out by Christmas. There's going to be an awful lot of reading for you to do!

LM is going to be headed up by Roger Kean — not satisfied with being a traitor to CRASH (as some of you felt), he's now about to do the same thing over on ZZAP! Roger promises LM is going to be an exciting read, covering all aspects of life as a teenager, from money and jobs through music and computer games to style, film, video and books. If you can't wait until Christmas to find out more about LM, there's a chance to attend an LM party in London next month — take a peek at the News Pages.

On the home front, the CRASH team has expanded, with the arrival of another staff writer, Tony Flanagan, and we're eagerly awaiting Auntie Aggie's departure so we can take over her room in CRASH Towers. There's hardly enough room to swing a Comps Minion in the CRASH office nowadays!

It's not just the CRASH team that's expanded, either. The Art department has gained another couple of helpers, including Ian Craig — who was ON THE COVER in Issue 21. He's going to be helping Oli with the illustration work on all the Newsfield magazines, and arrived just in time to plug in his airbrush and provide the artwork for our DYNAMITE DAN jukebox comp on Page 106.

On the plus side, Gary Liddon now no longer eats massive meals in (and all over) the office: he's scampered off to London with Flathead Andy (ex-Activision) to set up a software house by the name of THALAMUS which is owned by Newsfield. Gary and Andy are currently sorting out their programme of releases, which will cover Spectrum, Commodore and Amstrad machines, and they've already got a couple of games in the bag. More news, soon.

And we've had to go out and buy lots of extra teamugs — Mr Liddon was replaced by Richard "Dick" Eddy, a Cornish lad who is busily clotting the milk in the tea hut. (We don't get cream!) Lee Paddon and Tony Clarke have also joined the AMTIX! crew, and poor old Malcolm Harding, AMTIX! Editor, has hardly got room to park his bathchair. .

All these new helpers should mean that CRASH will get even better, and that's no bad thing, I'm sure you'll all agree.



OLIVER FREY

INDEX TO GAMES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

NEW CRASH STAFFER



This month sees the arrival of another Staff Writer — Gorgeous Pouting *I thought we'd had enough of this, thankyouverymuch*. Oh alright then. Tony Flanagan has abandoned his job as a college lecturer to try his chances with the undisciplined CRASH crew, and being a sensible man has brought his very own tea mug with him all the way from Shifnal, another sleepy Shropshire town. He's already zoomed up the motorway to Liverpool with Julian Rignall from ZZAP! and survived — see the Software Projects interview on Page 90 — so it looks like Tony is set to become The Bearded Man of Software Reviewing. Welcome Tony. We'll all want our own monogrammed mugs now . . .

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KERRASH!

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This year's Popular Computer World Show is to be held at Olympia in London and runs from the 3rd to the 7th of September. (The first two days are for trade and business visitors only) Widely regarded as THE event of the year for any one who has an inclination towards computers, the PCW show exhibitors include hundreds of companies who will be showing off their wares.

If you want a first hand preview of what will be coming out for the Spectrum over the autumn months, the PCW Show is vital visiting. Next month we should be bringing you a round-up of some of the goodies that are likely to be revealed for the first time at Olympia, and of course NEWSFIELD is taking a stand at the PCW Show — don't forget to pay us a visit. We'll be in the National Gallery on the first floor.

We've got 40 FREE PCW Show ticket packs, including the Official Show Guide, and they're worth £3 each. If you fancy free admission to the Show of the year, jot the answer to this simple question on the

There have been quite a few PCW Shows already; is the 1986 PCW Show the 7th, 8th, 9th or 10th?

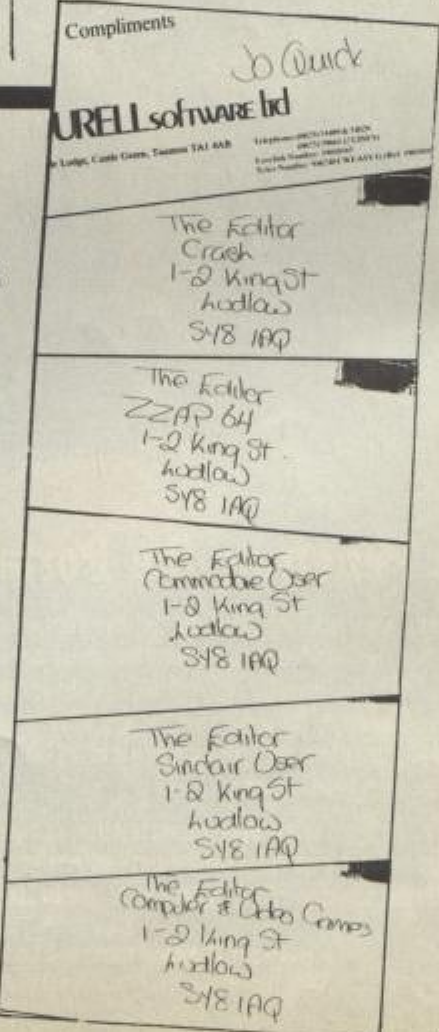
back of a postcard or envelope and send it off to PCW TICKETS, CRASH TOWERS, PO Box 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB. We'll be making the draw on August 20th to make sure the winners get their tickets on time, so get a move on.

LUDLOW MAGAZINE EMPIRE EXPANDS

Jo Quick was in such a hurry to tell people about the games DURELL are scheduled to release over the coming months that she sent out five press releases. One to CRASH, one to ZZAP!, one to Commodore User, one to Sinclair User and one to C&VG.

Realising that the centre of the Computer Magazine Publishing world is firmly placed in Ludlow, Jo sent them all to us at 1/2 King Street, as the picture shows . . . After Lloyd got over the shock of reading the press release five times, he managed to give the new DURELL games a mention in MERELY MANGRAM before sending the information winging off to the appropriate London offices.

Nothing like hammering the message home, eh Jo?



N·E·W·S I·N·P·U·T

GIRLIE TIPSTER GETS INTO TRAINING



LOLITA LOREN puts Girlie Tipster HANNAH SMITH through her paces. Or was that the other way round? Hannah looks like an unarmed combat natural . . . Watch out Melissa!



LOLITA LOREN goes into the ring and inflicts a crushing defeat on HELLCAT HAGGERTY



. . . Meanwhile Hannah raises a glass of Perrier Water (in training you know, none of these Minsonesque excesses)



Thanyouverymuch, says Hannah, as she shakes the hand of Noel-Edmonds-Lookalike Manager Steve Clear for making it all possible. Steve's quite happy to set up a ring and let Melissa and Hannah settle their differences. .

Our very own Girlie Tipster (and star of this month's cover), Hannah Smith, is certainly taking the challenge she issued to Melissa Ravenflame seriously. While Melissa hides behind her pseudonym down at C&VG, Hannah leaps into action, donning a MONTY ON THE RUN jogsuit and jumping at the chance to get some training in.

A little while ago, Worldwide Enterprises from Birmingham staged a wrestling tournament at the Ludlow nightclub, THE STARLINE. Spotting that a couple of lady wrestlers were on the program, and being a resourceful person, Hannah got in touch with the management and fixed up a training session with **Lolita Loren**, British Ladies Champion. . . .

GENESIS
BIRTH OF A GAME

Mark Strachan (the **MARK** in **DOMARK**) wended his merry way up to Ludlow this month to show us *Trivial Pursuits* which is due out on the Spectrum in September. While he was here he had a quick riffle through the GENESIS — BIRTH OF A GAME competition entries. Here he is, snapped at the official Competition desk in CRASH TOWERS. As you can see from the photograph, Mark was clearly 'amazed' by the number and general standard of entries.

Don't forget, the competition winner is likely to tread the path of fame and fortune . . . The winning entry will be selected very early in August by an impressive array of judges. The line-up consists of Dave Carlos of SOLUTION PR, Mark and Dominic from DOMARK, the team from DESIGN DESIGN, Graeme Kidd representing CRASH and Mel Croucher, who will act as independent judge.

Mel is rather pleased about this, because it means that DOMARK will finally have to cough up a bottle of champagne they've owed him for ages, for some reason so obscure that everyone has forgotten. Cheers Mel!



Mark Strachan, resplendent in his bow tie, leafs through the astounding number of entries for GENESIS — BIRTH OF A GAME and looks suitably impressed

THE AUTUMN PARTY!

Newsfield is throwing a party in my name — literally. You see in December a brand new magazine is being launched and it's called simply **LM**. Yes folks, it's me, **Lloyd Mangram**, and I'm on the make. Fed up with my piffling desk stuck between the expanse of Graeme Kidd and mud-wrestling, Candy-look-alike, Hanna Sniff, I've decided to branch out and licence my name to Newsfield for a weekly pay rise of £2.13 (gross). Well, if George Michael can go solo, why not me, I thought?

The party is being held in September as a fiendishly clever way of convincing big advertisers that their products will just not sell unless they get into **LM**. For some extraordinary reason, it seems these advertisers would like to look at some CRASH readers cavorting round a disco, which is where you come in (being CRASH readers an' all).

So where's it all happening? At no less a venue than the famous **Camden Palace** in London on September the 18th from late morning onwards (odd time to go bopping I know, but then advertisers are a funny crowd)! There'll be a lot going on plus a chance to be among the 150 first people ever to see **LM** (the magazine that is, I probably won't be invited as they're only paying for my name).

If you would like a chance to get to London, courtesy of Newsfield, visit the Camden Palace and start partying, fill in the form below. (You'll be mixing with some ZZAPers as well, so best behaviour)! The chosen ones will be contacted as soon as possible about travel arrangements etc.
Don't miss it!
LM

I would like a chance to go to Newsfield's LM Launch party at the Camden Palace on the 18th September 1986.

My age is ....
Name ....
Address ....
....
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Postcode ....
Telephone Number ....

Return as soon as possible to:

LM PARTY CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB

Fear & Loathing

IN SEARCH OF A SQUARE MEAL



It is hot. The ice is gently crackling as it fights a losing battle to keep my Bloody Mary at a drinking temperature. If this continues I might just pack it in and fly off somewhere cool. A sea breeze on a Greek beach sounds a tempting alternative to the city heat.

Actually I may as well be anywhere else but here, sweating over a word processor, because the software industry has gone into summer recess. Nobody wants to launch anything, even if it means copious cold drinks, in this weather.

I've even been ticked off this month for constantly dwelling on the state of my stomach. The lovely **Jeni Beattie**, who handles PR for **OCEAN**, apparently took offence at my remarks about the scarcity of free lunches from the Mancunian moguls.

"Next time we have a new game we'll just send him luncheon vouchers," she told Graeme. Or a Fortnums' hamper, Jeni . . . that would do nicely.

I have another follow up to the last column. Remember debonaire **Andrew Wright**, **ACTIVISION** press relations person and noted lobster hunter, whose photo featured among last issue's ramblings? Well, no sooner had he appeared than his fate was sealed!

It isn't so much that the blond bombshell is leaving the plush Hampstead headquarters of **ACTIVISION**. That's just playing follow my leader as **Greg Fischbach** bails out for pastures new. Interestingly, I interviewed this extremely rich American yonks ago — he hung on longer than Andy but even he couldn't resist the Curse of Minson.

No, the true horror is not even his move to The People's Republic of Islington but that (ha, ho, ha . . .) he's joining **NEWSFIELD**!

Yes, Andy is to head **THALAMUS**, the new software label, along with **Gary Liddon**, the only person I know who actually makes me shudder. Honestly, a half of Barbican and the Big L starts rolling around like a graduate of the Ollie Reed charm school.

Several examples of the Bodie and Doyle of bad behaviour's boorishness were to be savoured at a recent party, thrown by the extremely charming assistant ed of a rival magazine (guessing who is quite a **T'zer** in itself).

Myself, my attorney Tim, that well known man of medicine Dr Laszlo Leys and his fiancee, Courtenay, were enjoying a quiet drink when Wright took it upon himself



The Pearly Queen of Argus Press Software, Jane Smith. Would you send this woman a banana?

to physically abuse me. Liddon stood by and laughed. Even the Kray Brothers were preferable to this sort of harrassment.

Luckily it took mere words to set Andy to rights. Two words in fact, but I'm too much of a gentleman to mention her name in print. "'Ow did you know that?" asked the software industry's answer to Jimmy Somerville. No, that's unfair — Jimmy Somerville isn't a silly enough question to deserve such an answer.

Well, Andrew, The Shadow Knows that and a lot more, and unlike ZZAP'S puny penumbra, this Shadow comes out after dark. This Shadow knows who you treated to two nights in one of Ludlow's poshest hotels. But again I'm too much of a gentleman to say who . . . just that the room cost more than £1.99. Now 'ow did I know that?

Back to the clothes horse's sidekick though — Superyob! Amongst this human garbage disposal's feats is the small matter of the Apricot and chicken. Who else could possess the style and grace to cover the screen of somebody else's ACT computer with the greasy debris of a Colonel Sanders?

The machine had to be stripped down and bathed to remove the Kentucky Fried felon's remains. His behaviour at the party was so unwelcome that the hostess, sweet, delicate thing that she is, retired to bed very early indeed.

Understandably Andy has been hired to present the public face of **THALAMUS**. The thought of Half Biscuit-Half Beast, who weighs in at 16 stone, I'm told (and though he's over six feet tall manages to look much shorter) being the public face of anything is akin to an obscene Mount Rushmore monument in its magnitude.

Meanwhile in the world of software, strange things have been happening. The lovely **Jane Smith** of **ARGUS** recently received a banana through the post. So did several other gorgeous, pouting computer beauties. When somebody starts sending young women bananas, it's time for some hard core investigative journalism!

My first call was to my personal mole, the **Elegant Baxter**, who is no longer eligible, I'm happy to say. Michael is quite capable of making people go weak at the knees, though unluckily for him his suitors are not always one hundred per cent suited. He wasn't the man behind these particular fruity doings though.

Next I phoned Jane to see if she'd sing. Well, the banana may have been yellow but she was no canary. I asked her if it was firm or squishy to the touch but she declined to comment. All she would say was that an instruction accompanied it, warning her to wait for the gorilla.

Eventually the gorilla arrived — or rather a photo of said simian did. And with it an explanation. It was all a publicity stunt by a PR agency, touting for business. Now I ask you — if you were Jane Smith, would you hire somebody who sent you a banana to publicize your games?

Still, it brings us neatly back to where we started and my thought for the issue. In a month where there are no launches, even a Jiffy bag full of pulped banana would be welcome. So Jane, if you didn't eat it, please forward before I starve.

Yours in fear and loathing

Hunger S. Minson

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SUBTERRANEAN NIGHTMARE



Professor Fusion contemplates blowing out the candles at Neutrino's birthday party

Producer: US Gold Americana
Retail Price: **£2.99**
Author: **Tim and Jane Cloff**

During the 1980's, various nuclear weapons were tested in the Nevada desert. At the time, there appeared to be no harmful after effects on the surrounding environment. However, in 1991, five years after the last test, severe seismic tremours were recorded in the area of the testing site.

Professor Fusion, a top scientist and an expert in these things, has been sent to investigate. However, as he strides out across the sun-bleached Nevada desert in his little radiation suit, the ground begins to shake beneath him and a great chasm opens up. Suddenly, Professor Fusion feels his body being sucked downwards. By a miracle he survives the fall, and finds himself in a subterranean world of dark caves and even darker passageways. Slightly bemused, he dusts himself off and begins to explore.

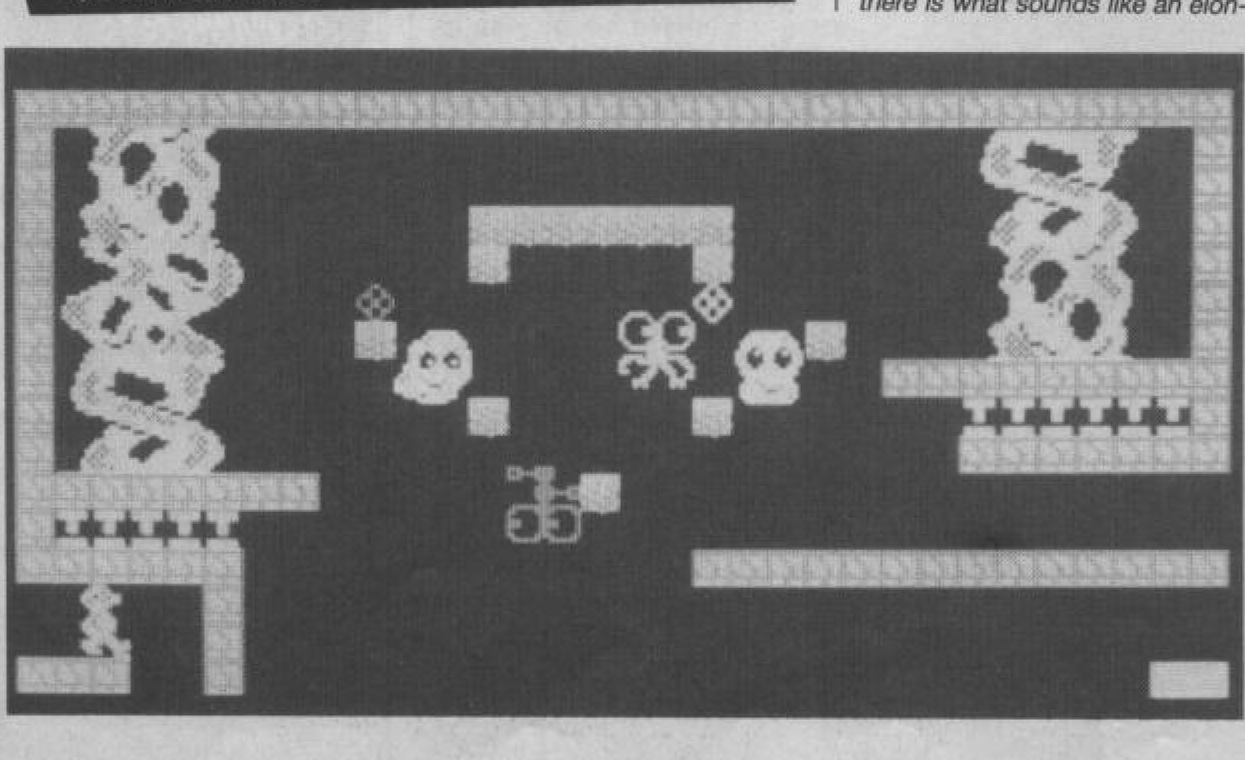
Large, glittering radium crystals are scattered on the cavern floors, deposited many years before. As the Professor picks these up, secret doorways open up before him. Intrigued, to say the least, Professor Fusion explores deeper, and deeper and deeper . . .

The Professor is not alone in the caves. They are populated by hideous monsters that have been deformed by the high levels of radiation. In the half light, they clutch at anything, including the Professor. Even his radiation suit can't protect him against these nasties and contact with them loses the Professor one of his four lives. Apart from the monsters, there are also mutant mushrooms to avoid, not to mention the Ominous Vat of Sticky Gunk which is hardly conducive to good health.

As the Professor progresses deeper into the caves, he discovers that the systems harbour a more sinister secret than mutant monsters: a huge underground complex has been built underground. The truth gradually begins to dawn on the unflappable Professor. This subterranean citadel is being used for storing deadly missiles which the mutants plan to release into the outside world as revenge for the nuclear tests that caused them all their problems. As soon as Professor Fusion realises this, he knows that he must escape at once and inform the powers that be of the impending danger. The more radium crystals he picks up, the more passageways are revealed to help him find the exit.

Professor Fusion moves around the complex by walking or jumping. Some monsters are so docile that they permit you to bounce on their heads in order to get to the higher levels in the caves, but most of them are not so friendly. There are no weapons involved in the game, so the Professor must stay alive by using his skill and dainty leaps to avoid the terrors which lie beneath the Nevada desert.

Oh dear. That looks like it could be a nasty drop in front of the Prof at the bottom left of the screen. Should he retrace his steps or take a chance?



CRITICISM

● **" After last month's unexciting start, I thought maybe AMERICANA could have done something more positive than this. It seems they can't. The graphics are nothing amazing, but there is some nice animation on some of the screens. Basically, it's just a very simple platform game, with no features that might make it something special. I didn't find it very playable, and was bored within half an hour. Platform freaks may find it grabs them as being a reasonably cheap bit of fun, but it doesn't appeal to me in any special way at all. "**

● *" There are so many trite platform games like this on the market, it is hard to see how big companies still release them. The graphics are above average, but only just. There are many characters, the majority of which flicker and jerk around the place quite badly. The various screens are pretty drab and uninteresting. There are a few platforms here and there and if you're lucky you might chance to see a decorative mushroom. The use of sound is poor. Instead of a tune there is what sounds like an elongated screech, and the spot effects during the game are minimal. Generally, there is nothing to keep me interested for more than a few goes at a time. So, even for its two pound price-tag, I wouldn't recommend it. "*

● " AMERICANA seem to be entering the Spectrum budget market in a very quiet manner. All of their games so far seem to be typical budget games, and to prove their point they've come up with a typical arcade adventure. *Subterranean Nightmare* is definitely nothing out of the ordinary but still presents as much game as most higher priced programs. The graphics are better than most of the small stick graphics that I've come to expect from budget games. These are very colourful, extremely well animated and drawn with precision. The sound is nothing to shout about — so I won't! Gameplay is very accurate and sensible. The presentation is well up to standard and contains some very well written and meaningful instructions. *Subterranean Nightmare* is a very good product from Americana, but I feel they may be a little late with this type of game. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: O left. P right, Z jump, W suicide, E abort, S save, Enter load
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: not too bad
Use of colour: a few colour clashes
Graphics: a bit jerky
Sound: nothing to write home about
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling arcade adventure
General rating: Might appeal to a hardened platform game addict

Use of computer	50%
Graphics	59%
Playability	56%
Getting started	66%
Addictive qualities	52%
Value for money	59%
Overall	**56%**

KUNG FU MASTER

Producer: US Gold with Ocean
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Data E**

The honourable Kung-Fu Master is in a bit of a fix. Hidden within the evil wizard's temple is a fair oriental damsel in distress. In the cause of truth and justice, the martial arts supremo must battle his way through the rooms in the temple to try and save her from a terrible ordeal.

This wizard is no fool, however, and has made sure that his little lotus blossom is well protected against any who might try to rescue her from his dastardly clutches. He has used his magical powers to good effect and has set many traps to prevent her from leaving.

Mystical globes hover sinisterly at head level, waiting to burst and shower our hero with deadly pieces of shrapnel. Vases drop from the ceiling to reveal poisonous snakes which slither around under the Master's feet. He must jump to avoid them or else he will be bitten by the little sacks of venom and won't be at all happy. If yellow spheres drop near the Kung-Fu Master he must watch out, for when they break open they reveal fire-breathing dragons. These can be destroyed, but their flaming breath is deadly if you get too close. The wizard's henchmen are not to be trifled with either. Although you may be a Master of Kung Fu, this does not guarantee that you are invincible. The henchmen will try to dispatch you with a blow to the head or a with a sharp and pointy knife.

The Kung-Fu Master walks along the scrolling play area, and has a variety of moves in his fighting repertoire. Flying kicks, body punches and squatting kicks, all accessed in *Exploding Fist* style, are just some of the ways in which he can dispose of his enemies.

At the end of each floor a door leads to the next level. The portals are heavily guarded by the wizard's lackeys, and a motley crew they are too — from giants to boomerang-weilding felons, their sole object in life is to stop you from gaining access to the next floor in the temple.

Being a mystical fellow, the Kung-Fu Master has been granted three lives. He loses one of these every time he is defeated by one of the guards in the temple, and falls off the bottom of the screen. The number of lives left is shown at the top of the screen along with the amount of energy left. Some of the nasties in the game sap energy rather than killing outright. When the energy level, represented by a blue line, gets too low, a life is lost and play resumes at the start of the current level.

For every guard despatched to an early grave, points are awarded depending on the the power of the vanquished opponent, and a meter keeps track of the score so far. For every 40,000 points collected, an extra life is awarded. Quite apart from all the wizard's henchman, there is another problem for our slanty-eyed hero to contend with. A strict time limit is set to the game, and each level has to be completed before this runs out. A clock in the status panel starts at 2,000 and counts down. The state of the wizard's army enemy is represented by a red band underneath the energy chart, which shrinks a little more as each minion is defeated.

The persecuted damsel is trapped within the fifth level of the temple, held captive in a dark, locked room. The mission is completed when she has been freed. If you want to continue the game, you return to the first floor, but from then onwards there are more of the wizard's minions. The task is much harder second time around. . . .



The Kung Fu Master floors an opponent, but a midget and a giant are standing by to finish him off

CRITICISM

● **" I first saw this one in the arcades about a year ago. I didn't really rate it that highly then. On the Spectrum, it has lost its nice sound and graphics, and any addictive qualities that the original ever possessed. There isn't anything in this game that remotely pleases me I'm afraid. Even the thought of beating up the odd Ninja bloke doesn't really appeal anymore. The graphics are really very poor — there are so many attribute problems that it's hard to tell what is going on, and the use of colour is also quite bad. The sound, on the other hand, is pretty good. There are a couple of nice tunes and a spot effect now and then. On the whole US Gold seem to have produced another 'no-no'. "**

● *" Well I suppose I shouldn't really have expected a great translation from the arcade game but the least they should have done is got the graphics and colour sorted out. If you look at someone playing* Kung Fu Master, *all that is apparent is the most awful flicker of the graphics. The game is fairly average as far as Spectrum games go and, as a result, it doesn't do the arcade version justice. I didn't like the idea of choosing which level to enter at as this spoils the addictiveness of the game. Each level in* Kung Fu Master *is no harder than the previous one as far as I could see. I didn't find myself as stuck on the game as I felt I should have been. Not a brilliant conversion. "*

● " The arcade game is nothing mega-amazing by today's standards, but it is playable, and very addictive. Not so US GOLD's conversion, however. The front end to the game is quite impressive. The music (if you can call it that) is irritating, and the game very definitely lacks something to make it addictive. A big disappointment on something that, with the exception of the scrolling, would convert quite well to the Spectrum, although it looks as though it hasn't. An element of the original playability, albeit a weak element, still exists. A disappointment, really. "

Beware the fire-breathing dragon because he's not nice. If that vase breaks, you'll have hoards of slithering snakes to contend with as well



COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: quite responsive
Use of colour: not very good at all
Graphics: lots of attribute problems and lots of flicker
Sound: tune plays throughout
Skill levels: five
Screens: five levels, scrolling backdrop
General rating: Overall, a very poor conversion from the arcade game

Use of computer	72%
Graphics	55%
Playability	55%
Getting started	63%
Addictive qualities	56%
Value for money	57%
Overall	**56%**

CAVERNS OF KONTONIA

Producer: Atlantis.
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **John Shepherd**

Our hero is trapped, deep in the darkest recesses of a set of dank caves. The only light comes from glowing patches of phosphorous on the slime covered walls which twinkle in the half-light. As feelings of claustrophobia set in, he realises he must get out as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the character has not been blessed with huge amounts of courage and this makes his task all the more difficult.

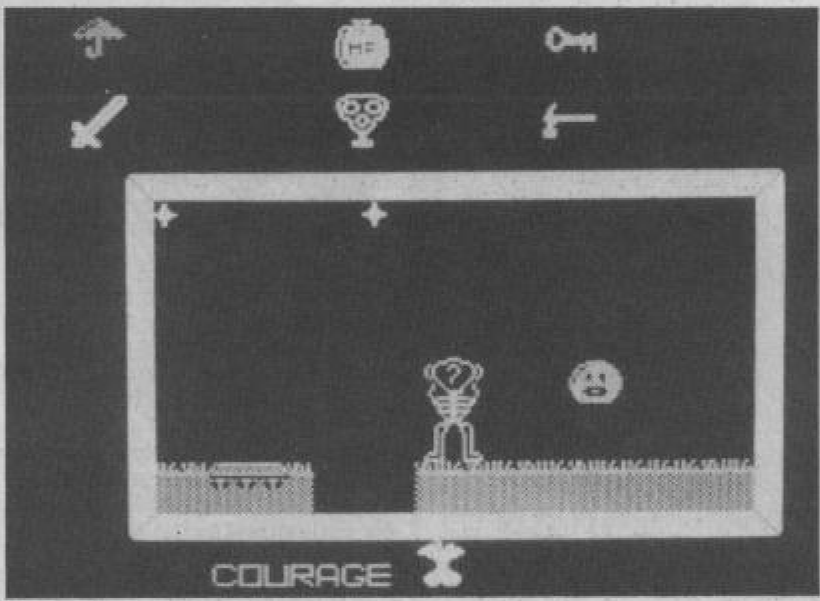
To add to his predicament the caverns of Kontonia are filled with various monsters whose staple diet seems to consist mainly of unwary pot-holers. These nasties must be avoided at all costs. Every time the character clashes with them his courage is sapped and eventually it fails him altogether and he dies. The courage-count is represented by an apple at the bottom of the screen. As the far from intrepid explorer gets weaker, the apple is eaten away to the core.

Life in the caverns isn't too hopeless, however, as there are various objects lying around that come in handy. The only way to get out of the underground maze is to collect the sword and the key of ultimate power. Without these, the mission is futile. Other objects that assist escape are shown at the top of the main screen. When an umbrella is picked up, for example, the potholer is protected from the occasional shower of toxic rain. The bag of hole-filler may be used to bridge gaps in the cavern floor which you can't get over.

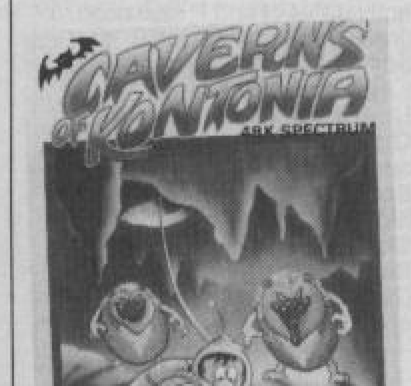
The best way to stay alive in the Caverns of Kontonia is to avoid the monsters, but our hero can get his own back. If he manages to pick up the hammer, then he can have great fun indulging in a spot of nasty-bashing until the hammer breaks. Some of the caverns in the game are filled with poisonous gases. Gas kills, unless you have had the foresight to pick up and wear the gas-mask.

Our hero moves around the caves on foot, climbing down ropes to get to the lower levels or using teleports to explore new parts of the cave system.

The game contains eight screens, and some levels cannot be completed before the correct objects have been picked up. Do you have the strength to keep the wimpy hero going, or will his courage fail and condemn him to spend the rest of his life entombed within the evil Caverns of Kontonia?



If our little hero is not vigilant, then a fate worse than death awaits him. It's not nice being stripped to the bone . . .



CRITICISM

● **" This has to be the most infuriating game of the week. It's so easy to die before you get anywhere. Like so many other budget games, this has no lasting appeal or outstanding features. The graphics are of an average standard: the many undetailed characters flicker and the backgrounds are boring and uncolourful. The sound is also fairly mediocre, with only a few odd effects here and there. Not a wondrous game. "**

● *" Ugh! What's happened to* ATLANTIS *games of late? Some of the ones I've seen have been really dire. A pity, after they started with such playable games.* Caverns of Kontonia *is pretty bad. The graphics are quite pleasing to start with, but when the colour starts clashing, they get less and less attractive. Playing through the same boring screens time and time again is very irritating, and the whole game begins to get very boring after an all too short while. Not one I'd recommend. "*

● " Oh great, at last ATLANTIS have come up with a game that is above their usual standard. The game reminded me very much of the not so old *Hocus Focus*. The screen display is only a third of the screen big, and it consists of some very large, colourful and podgy graphics. The presentation of the game was very poor — there's only two lines of instructions in the inlay, and very poor sound in the game itself. The control of your character is a bit slack but it was quite easy to get used to after a while. Overall, another typical budget game, but bit better than the usual ATLANTIS efforts. "

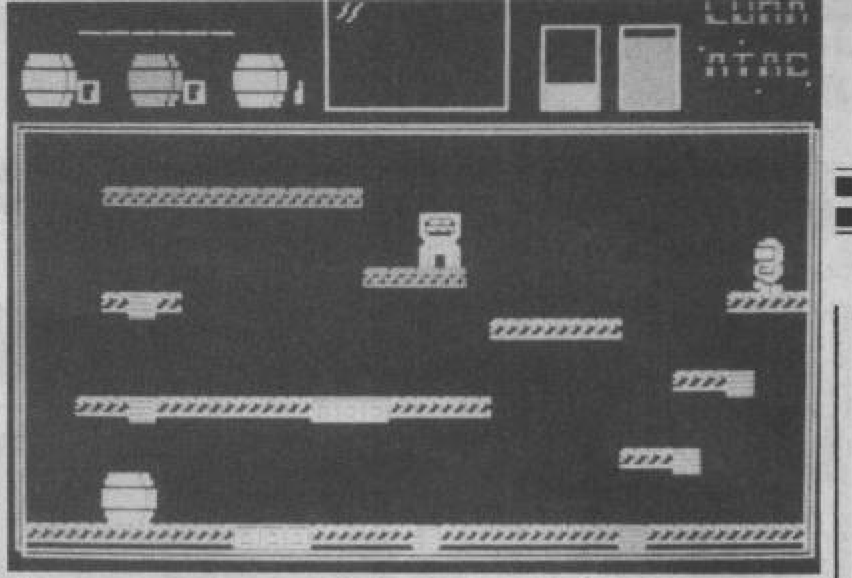
COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up/down, A down/pick-up/activate, O left, P right, H hold
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: fairly responsive
Use of colour: quite colourful, though there are some clashes
Graphics: not very good
Sound: poor sound
Skill levels: one
Screens: eight
General rating: A fairly run-of-the-mill budget title

Use of computer	46%
Graphics	48%
Playability	42%
Getting started	44%
Addictive qualities	45%
Value for money	48%
Overall	**46%**

LUNA ATAC





The minutes are ticking away. Can our little spaceman collect all the fuel barrels he needs in time?

Producer: Atlantis
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Nigel Edwards**

Trapped inside a space ship crawling with aliens, the spaceman wants to escape. Robot patrols are on his trail. Somehow the intrepid spaceman must locate his escape shuttle, refuel it and crack the code so he can flee from the merciless invaders.

Apart from being very deadly by themselves, the robots have also booby-trapped the ship with elaborate snares to try and get rid of the spaceman. Spikes rise ominously out of the floor and impale the unwary spaceman if he treads on them. Beware of glowing panels in the floor. When they're white these are quite harmless, but if they change to blue when you're walking over them they sap your power pack considerably. Contact with the patrolling staff also results in power loss.

Your power pack is shown at the top of the screen, coloured magenta and labelled AC. Each clash with the patrol robots or a trap around the space station results in a drain of this power. When the level becomes too low, the spaceman dies and the game is over.

In order to re-fuel the shuttle, nine barrels of fuel have to be collected. Fuel barrels come in three colours: magenta, green and cyan. When three barrels of each colour have been collected, their contents can be mixed to provide the fuel for the shuttle. These barrels are situated on platforms and are studiously guarded by the robots.

The spaceman can move around the space station on foot or he can use the teleport pads, represented by flashing cyan boxes. If he needs to super-leap to another higher platform, then this can be arranged by way of striped pieces of floor. When the spaceman stands on these he automatically jumps upwards and can get to where he wants to go.

Once all the barrels have been collected the spaceman still has to gain security access to the shuttle. For this he needs a secret password. Dotted around the space station are computer terminals. When the spaceman approaches one of these he is given a series of letters. Only one of these letters will go towards making up the password anagram. If he selects the right one, then it is displayed at the top of the screen and transferred to the Master Computer. However, if the spaceman chooses wrongly, then some of his valuable energy is sapped away. Six letters are needed to build the access code to the Master Computer.

There is a time limit to the game. Next to the AC box is a green one labelled TM. The green level gradually goes down as the game progresses and if the escape mission is not carried out within 15 minutes then the game is over.

CRITICISM

● **" ATLANTIS has never really impressed me with software. The whole look of** Luna Atac **is very unimpressive and offputting. As with most budget games from this company, the screen contains lots of colour and very small, plain graphics. The idea of** Luna Atac **being a platform game is nothing new but going around getting the barrels and guessing the codes is quite addictive at first, but after a few games I realised that there isn't a great deal to the game. "**

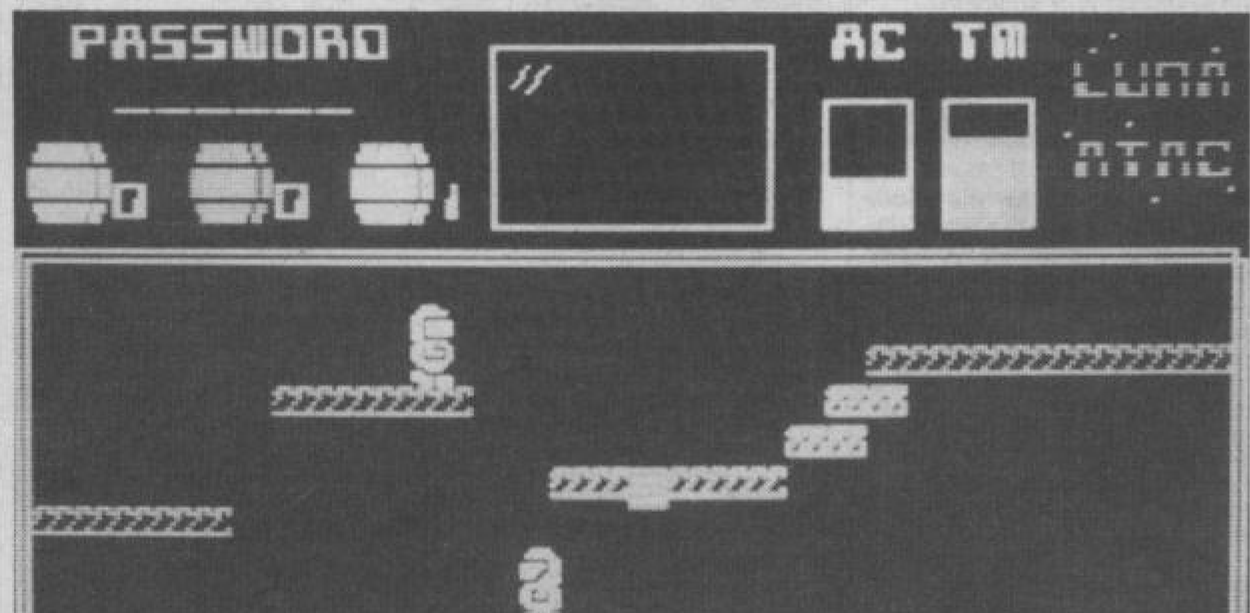
● *" I seem to remember a game much like this a couple of issues ago called* Hypa Raid. *This is not a great improvement, but at least you can get to look around the space station without having to work out problems first. The game is not really original or compelling but for two quid you can't really expect it to be. However, if this is your type of game I'm sure it'll keep you playing for an afternoon at least. The graphics are below average — there are only platforms and small undetailed characters. The sound is also poor. The odd spot effect is all you are likely to hear. This seems to be a little more playable than* Hypa Raid *so if you liked that you'll probably get on with this. "*

● " Luna Atac bears graphical resemblances to *Frank N. Stein,* which in itself is not a bad thing, but the screens are very empty looking. The game isn't amazingly big, but getting around isn't quite as easy as it first seems. ATLANTIS seems to have stopped production of mainly good games and the standard, in general, seems to have gone down a little. That said, *Luna Atac* is a reasonable game, but not one I'd recommend to anyone who likes a game that's immediately hookable, as it takes some persistence to get into properly. Not bad, overall ATLANTISbut could do better. . . . "

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q left, W right, P activate, Q W and P also used to crack computer codes
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very colourful
Graphics: quite good, though sparse at times
Sound: occasional spot effects, but that's all
Skill levels: one
Screens: 21
General rating: quite good, but could be better

Use of computer	55%
Graphics	49%
Playability	55%
Getting started	54%
Addictive qualities	56%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**55%**



Beware of the robot patrol and their deadly booby-traps! In this spaceship the floors are never what they seem . . .

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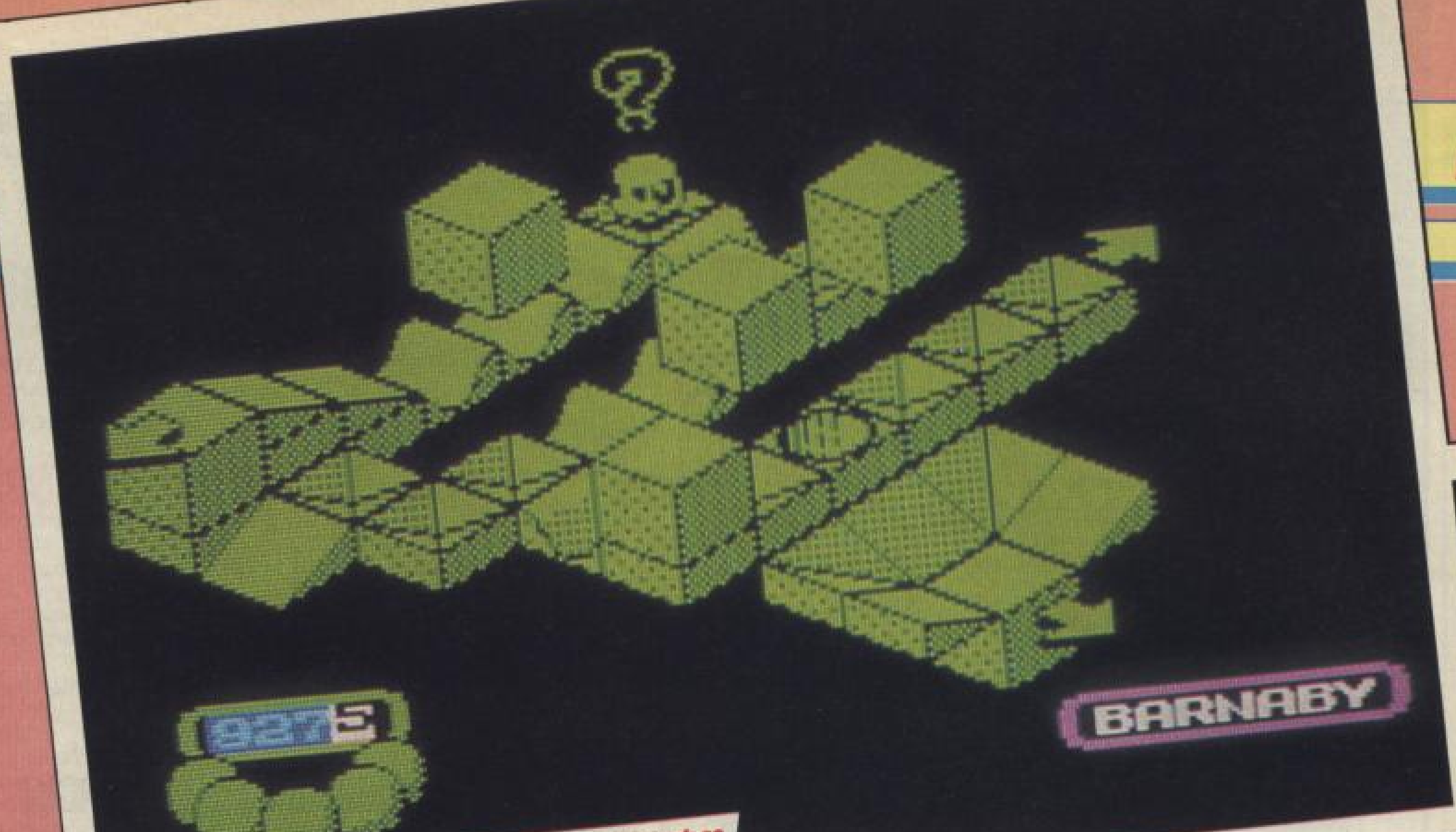
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On a green screen, Bobby sits stunned by a moving block as the counter whizzes down in supercharge mode



A really complicated set of rampways and inclines confronts the heroic Big Brother of the Bearing family as he continues on his quest to fetch Barnaby safely home

In the land of Technofear, mothers tell their baby Ball Bearings fearsome tales about the perilous Metaplanes. They say that unless they're good little Bearings the monsters from the Metaplanes will come and get them in their sleep. Most young Bearings listen to this story with wide eyes and heed what their parents have told them, but occasionally the odd rebellious Bearing decides that he or she knows best and goes out to explore . . .

In all fairness, Bobby Bearing and his brothers were very obedient children until Cousin Nasty came to stay. He convinced the

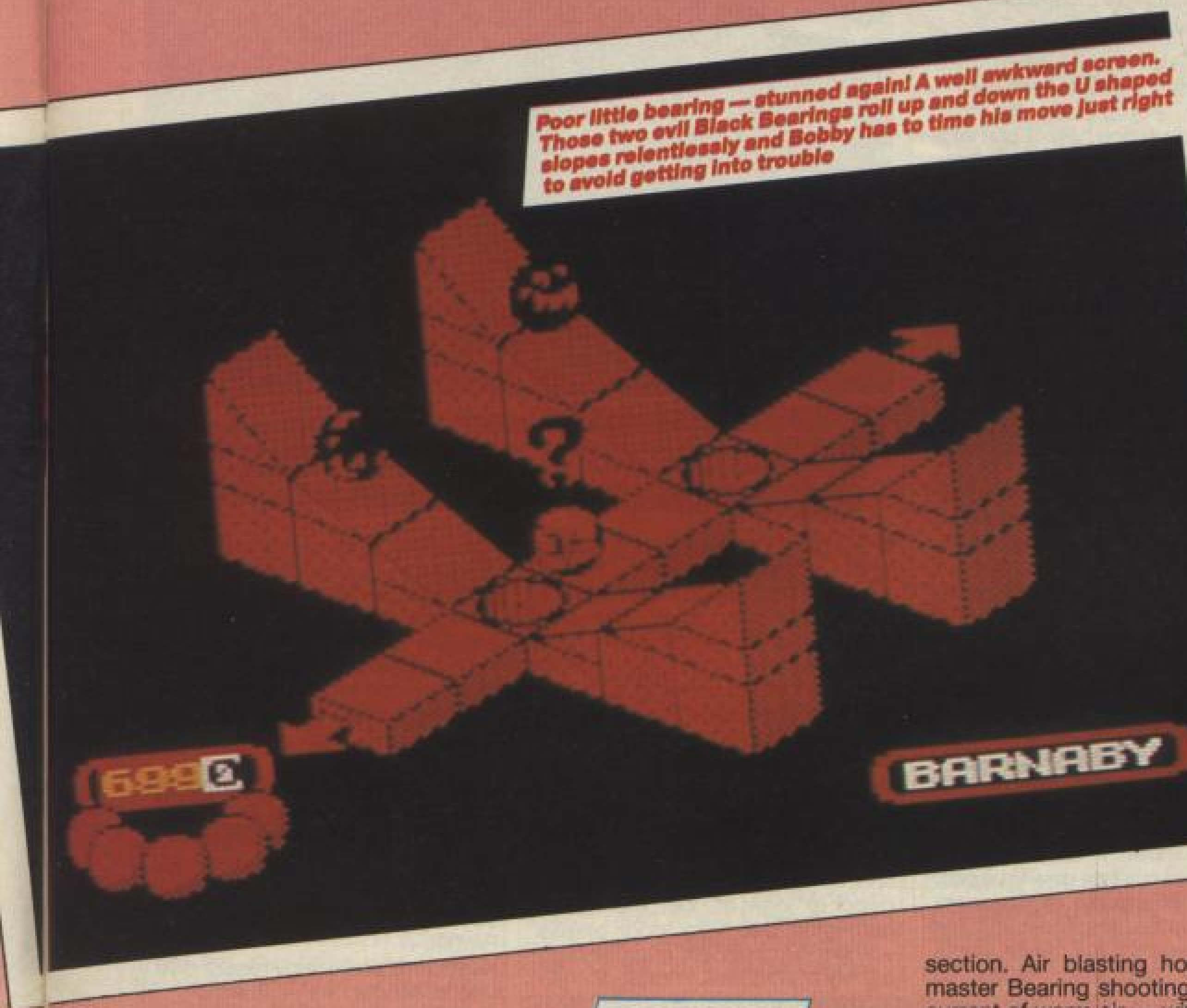
CRITICISM

" Though very derivative in its presentation — Spindizzy **does seem to be a title destined to inspire a million clones —** Bobby Bearing **is a heap of fun to play. Its main appeal is the realistic reactions of the little steel ball as he's guided around the Metaplanes. Bobby realistically rebounds off all manner of obstacles in a very convincing manner, even curved ones. As far as the game goes, it's brill, though a little bit difficult at first. It's very easy to get lost when you start out since some screens tend to repeat. After a while though, the old arcade adventuring instinct should take control and a fairly logical map forms within your mind.** Bobby Bearing **is a game I'd recommend to most people, especially those enthralled by** Spindizzy. **Though the format is similar, the challenge is different enough to stir up a fair bit of enthusiasm. "**



Producer: The Edge
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Robert and Trevor Figgins**

B•O•B•B•Y B•E•A•R•I•N•G



Poor little bearing — stunned again! A well awkward screen. Those two evil Black Bearings roll up and down the U shaped slopes relentlessly and Bobby has to time his move just right to avoid getting into trouble

younger Bearing brothers that the Metaplanes were quite harmless and suggested a little sortie. However, the stories about the Metaplanes were not pure fiction and the Bearing brothers, together with their cousin, disappeared without trace. Being the eldest in the family Bobby must venture into the Metaplanes himself and try and rescue his relatives before it's too late.

The Metaplanes are inhabited by a race of mutant bearings — fearsome black spheres with huge teeth. Their idea of fun is to prey upon innocent bearings and do nasty things to them. Bobby soon discovers this for himself as he roams around the 3D maze that makes up the Metaplanes. The Black Bearings are very possessive about their property and get quite vicious. They jump out from dark corners and stun our hero into seeing stars.

Somewhere in the Metaplane, Bobby's brothers lie in a state of unconsciousness. The heroic Bobby must locate his relatives and then push them along, back through the maze, and shove them through the tube that leads to their home. Not a simple task, as the maze is very large and it is very easy to get lost or wander into a screen from which there is no escape.

Bobby Bearing can roll around the maze following the arrows that show him the exits from the current section. Air blasting holes send master Bearing shooting up on a current of warm air — with careful timing they can be used as lifts to get the little smiling steel ball to previously inaccessable areas.

Each monochromatic screen contains a single section of the three dimensional maze, and as Bobby moves off an arrowed edge of one screen, the next section of maze flips into view. Switches in the ground turn on magnets, trigger off nasties and activate blocks which may be used as lifts when Bobby passes over them.

Apart from the evil Black Bearings, there are other dangers in the Metaplanes. Bobby really has to keep his wits about him. Slabs of concrete come smashing down to the ground and getting caught under a descending block has stunning results — literally. Bobby must also keep to the pathways in the maze — if he strays too close to the edge of a ramp on the screen he stands a reasonably good chance of falling off. When Bobby is stunned a little question mark appears above his head and his eyes roll in confused concussion.

At the bottom right hand side of the screen a little counter ticks down as the game progresses. Whenever Bobby falls off a ledge or gets squashed by a flying slab he is incapable of moving for a while and the clock counter speeds up, removing vital seconds from the time limit in which the missing bearings have to be rescued.

A window below the main play area reveals the name of the next member of the Bearing family who should be found and herded to safety. Naughty Cousin Nasty. Mummy Bearing is going to be well cross when she gets hold of him!

CRITICISM

" Fabulous! A surreal world in your Spectrum where its residents stick to the laws of gravity, inertia, curvature and all the rest, completely convincingly. Bobby has got to be one of the best computer characters yet — his animation is superb and his smiling gob is really endearing. The first noticeable thing about Bobby Bearing is the loader: it's a sort of Fighting Warrior **loader but a scrolling message moves along the bottom while loading — very professional. I found the presentation of the game very smart and pleasing. The graphics in are neat and well detailed — especially the baddies. The sound leaves a bit to be desired with only a few spot effects. The best point about** Bobby Bearing **is the actual animation and movement of Bobby around the maze — all done very smoothly and accurately. 'Curvispace 3D' is the name THE EDGE have given to this new technique — well worth checking out. "**

CRITICISM

" Hooray it's finally here! The torturous wait is over at long last and I think I can truthfully say that it was worth it. What a lovely game. The 3D playing area is very good, although I think that some of the screens tend to repeat a bit too often. It is quite easy to get lost if you aren't too familiar with the whole area. Your character is also very good, moving around the place well. I was a little surprised to find that he couldn't jump about or fall off the edges of sections of the maze — this gives the feeling that you are not in complete control all the time, but makes life easier. The sound is good, with some very nice effects in the game but no tune. I recommend this game to everyone, especially Marble Madness **and** Spindizzy **freaks. "**

COMMENTS

Control keys: Y-P up and right, H-ENTER down and left, alternate keys on bottom row up and left/down and right
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: monochromatic
Graphics: very neat details
Sound: a few effects, but no tune
Skill levels: one
Screens: 150
General rating: A technically stunning game which is addictive and fun to play

Use of computer	94%
Graphics	94%
Playability	92%
Getting started	92%
Addictive qualities	93%
Value for money	91%
Overall	**94%**

TOADRUNNER

Producer: Ariolasoft
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Dave Harper**

Toadrunner — half man, half frog — has been trapped inside a tortuous maze. Hidden within the maze is the beautiful Princess who would be rather glad to be rescued, even if it is by a one-eyed, slimy frog being. No doubt when she bestows a girlie kiss on his revolting forehead he'll turn into a handsome prince — but there's a lot to sort out before that can happen.

Mr Toad must scamper around the colourful rooms in the Stone Master's castle looking for objects to assist him in his quest to destroy the Stone Master and release the Princess. The intrepid natterjack must collect those which he thinks will help him and ignore those which are useless. Toadrunner has four pockets and they can be used to store objects until he can think of a use for them.

Only four objects can be carried at one time and these can be dropped or picked up when necessary. If the toad wants to use an object, then he must first make sure that it is nestling comfortably in pocket number four. A press of the fire or 'use' button brings it into action. All the objects in the game are displayed on the menu screen before the game starts, with labels to assist identification.

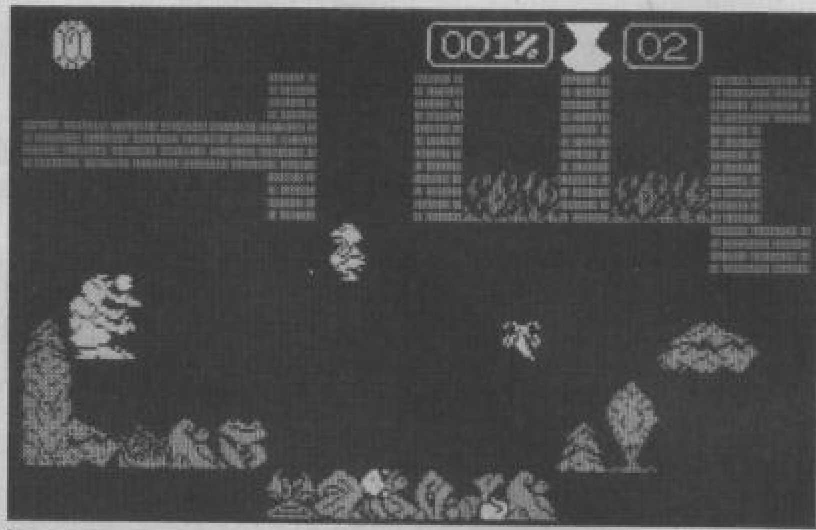
The Stone Master's castle is a sinister hole and quite unpleasant even to a horrible warty toad. It is filled with nasty winged sprites who mercilessly pursue the toady hero, sapping his strength with every onslaught. The Stonemaster's ugliest henchmen guard the exits from some of the rooms — their touch is usually deadly, and there are only five lives to play with. The guards can be disposed of eventually, but the right object has to be in Toady's pocket for each guardian . . .

Exits are marked by gaps in the dungeon walls. They may be attended by the nasty guardians or they may be open. Sometimes, there is more than one exit, and this is where Toad starts to wish that God had given small amphibious creatures psychic powers. Only one of these triple exits leads safely to the other room. The other two lead to certain death, and it's no use trying to memorise which of the three exits is the right one, because they change every time Toad tries to pass through a set of portals.

Although toads can remain out of water for a while, evolution has not yet provided them with the ability to survive indefinite spells on land. After seventy-five Toad Time Units have elapsed, our hero dehydrates and death is usually fairly imminent. After six Toad Time Units have elapsed, a thief appears on the screen. He snatches any object he can get his hands on. Fortunately, the thief can only carry one object at a time and is very greedy with it. If he sees another object within close proximity, he drops the original object and snatches the new one. The robber can be killed, but despatching him while he's holding an object means that object is lost from the game — and may make finding the Princess impossible.

A percentage readout in the status area shows how much of the adventure has been completed. The contents of Toad's four pockets are revealed, together with the energy icon which turns black as energy is lost. A clock keeps track of Toadtime.

And all for the love of a Princess



Toady has just picked the correct exit from the room above — flames burn at the bottom of the other two passageways at the top of the screen. Now there's that guardian to take care of. . . .

CRITICISM

● **" Toadrunner's bears an immediate resemblance to the ELECTRIC DREAMS release, *Riddlers Den*. Briefly, the scenario concerns one lovesick prince in the guise of an overweight reptile. He searches for his princess in the hope she'll transform his slimy body to something more desirable. Original? I think not. Graphically, it's no more than adequate, with our reptilian hero wobbling through the game. Gameplay is all too familiar: it's an average arcade adventure with no features that haven't been implemented better elsewhere. Fans of David Harper's earlier game will no doubt love this one, but it's a bit expensive to my mind. "**

● *" I must confess to not having seen* Riddlers Den, *so I approached* Toadrunner *with a completely open mind. The presentation of the game is very neat and colourful, with some good drawing on the loading and title screens. The sound is a bit of a let down, as it only consists of a few whirrs and clicks. The graphics are very colourful and to avoid character clashes, the author has made sure that the characters don't invade each other's character space. I felt that* Toadrunner *was good to look at, but the actual gameplay was very poor unless you are into puzzles. It's a bit hard to play and suffers from poor collision detection. "*

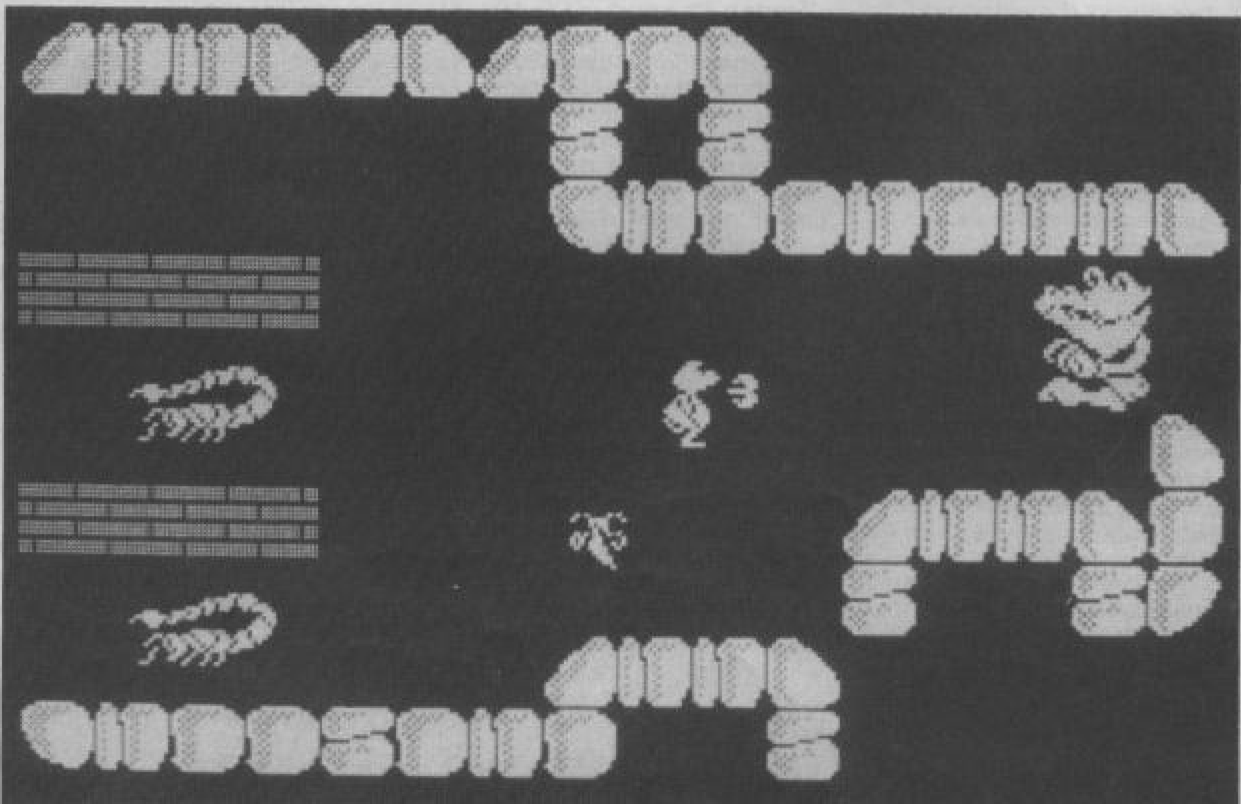
● " Definitely *Riddlers Den II*, except that this is probably near to impossible to complete. The graphics used are colourful and fairly well drawn. The characters move around the screen nicely and your frog has a novel wobble! The sound is generally run-of-the-mill stuff, with effects during the game and a loud shreiking noise when you begin or end a game. The game itself is infuriating: the random triple exits tend to kill you off rather suddenly and introduce a frustrating element of pot luck into the game. You'd have to be very persistent to complete the game — one for *Riddlers Den* fans and masochists everywhere! "

COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair and Protek
Keyboard play: fairly responsive
Use of colour: very colourful
Graphics: quite well drawn
Sound: mundane
Skill levels: one
Screens: 55
General rating: A very difficult sequel to *Riddlers Den*

Use of computer	79%
Graphics	76%
Playability	65%
Getting started	71%
Addictive qualities	69%
Value for money	68%
Overall	**68%**

Armed with a weapon, Toad can deal with the small nasties, but the Alligator character blocking the exit isn't at all worried!



CAGARA

Producer: Players
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Sam Garforth and Steven Cork**

A naughty Gypsy has cast a wicked spell which means that you can't get back in to your castle. To make matters worse, you've been incarcerated in a Crystal Sphere. Only by finding the magic chalice of Cagara can you break the spell and get back home.

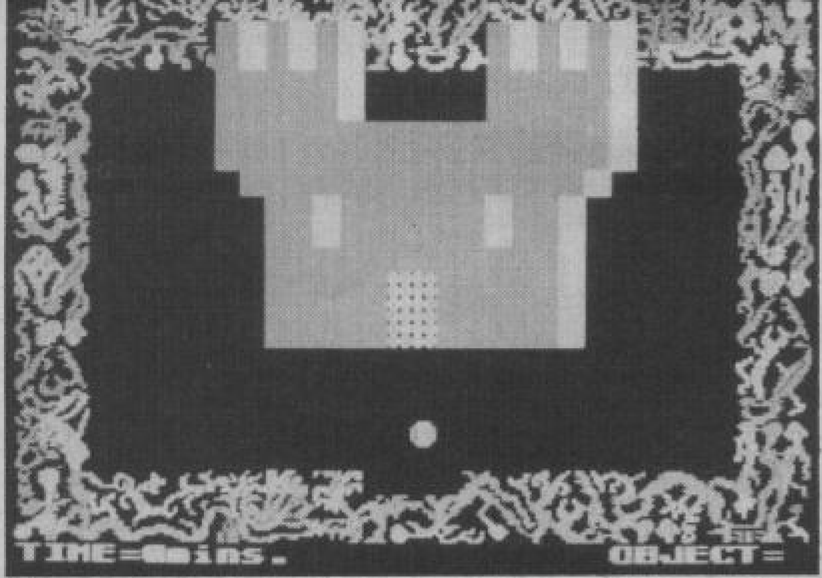
To accompany you in your quest is your favourite hamster, Eric. Some help eh? But little Eric packs a powerful punch. Somehow he's managed to grow helicopter blades! This means that when you release him he can put a timely end to the various nasties that are out to stop you finding the chalice.

Moving out from the castle grounds you enter a world of mazes, caverns, and exotic gardens. Sometimes you have to travel in the dark, with only one section of a maze in view. There are also hidden rooms, some of them cul-de-sacs, where you must avoid getting cornered by the grizzly ghouls in pursuit.

The monsters come in a variety of forms: animate gargoyles, whirling disks and crystalline spheres. There are also flying arrows and the odd laser beam or two. And don't get too close to the colourful hedgerows as nasties can leap out at any moment.

Finding out where the chalice is hidden is really a matter of trial-and-error. There are no screen directions, but there are various objects along the way which come in handy. The sword is particularly useful as it can be used to slay monsters: they have to be stabbed in the left ear — apparently their most vulnerable spot!

Without the chalice there's no chance of returning home. And don't expect any compliments at the end of the game. It's not nice being called a 'useless worm'!



The castle gates are closed. There is nothing you can do but leave the castle grounds and find the chalice.

CRITICISM

● **" Hmmm...! This game, to say the least, is pretty tricky, in fact, I'd say that it's almost impossible. The graphics are uninteresting, the characters are very primitive and the backgrounds are unvaried. The sound is pretty much run-of-the-mill stuff, although there are a couple of fair to average tunes on the title screen and a few spot effects during the game. Generally, there is nothing here that I haven't seen before. Another less than wonderful game from PLAYERS I'm afraid. "**

● *" I had great difficulty trying to get* Cagara *to load and once I did, I must admit, I wish I hadn't. The presentation is not all that bad for a budget game, and the sound is nearly decent too. I just found the game much too boring. The keyboard response is very good but the graphics are very poor compared with most budget stuff — they're small and colourful. Even the most excitable person wouldn't be impressed with this one. "*

● " *Cagara* is really weird — not in the sense of it being an entertainingly original game, either. The game, even for £2.99, is far too simple, and though it moves at a reasonable pace, gets boring after only a few minutes. I've seen the scenario more than once before as well: recover the chalice and get out? The sound on the title screen is the best bit of it. The graphics are very boring, with only a border around most of the screens, and some very flickery characters. Even for the price, *Cagara* is one game that I wouldn't think about buying. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, O left, P right, bottom row to fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: nothing special
Graphics: uninspiring
Sound: above average
Skill levels: one
Screens: PLAYERS didn't know!
General rating: A poor game, lacking in originality

Use of computer	50%
Graphics	37%
Playability	40%
Getting started	44%
Addictive qualities	35%
Value for money	47%
Overall	39%

CON-QUEST

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail Price: **£2.99**
Author: **Derek Brewster**

Oscar has trouble with squatters. There he is, just about to move in to his spacious gothic castle, only to find that someone has got there first. The evil Demon Grell and his merry band of sprites have set up residence already and are none too keen to vacate the property. But if Oscar doesn't persuade his unwanted visitors to find somewhere else to live, his soul will be condemned to eternal hell. The game follows Oscar's efforts to rid his castle of ghoulies.

Various objects lying around the rooms of the castle can be used to destroy the spectral nasties. At the bottom of the screen is a row of icons that must be used in conjunction with the action pointer. When Oscar sees an object which he thinks might help him, moving the pointer to the picking-up hand and pressing the action key collects the item and stores it in one of his spacious pockets. This icon select systems allows objects to be examined, used or dropped.

The Demon's apprentices are a vindictive lot and try anything to steal Oscar's soul. Contact with them drains Oscar's life energy which is shown on an hour glass at the bottom of the screen. If Oscar finds his life-energy being used up too quickly, he must find the Globe of Invulnerability. Once inside, he can travel around the castle, impervious to the attacks of the beasties.

It isn't very nice having a supernatural presence in your house, especially when it's trying to kill you. Will Oscar manage to rid his Real Estate of the multi-coloured nasties, or will he be forced to flat-share for ever after? As usual, it's up to you to sort things out.



Oscar trembles as the ghouls and ghosties approach

CRITICISM

● **" Oh dear. Why have MAD gone and ruined their reputation by putting out such a bad game? The biggest pity though is the game itself. It's acutely unprofessional in that it's boring, both graphically and playability-wise. For three quid, it's not good value, and I don't think I would play it for pleasure. "**

● *" I was really disappointed with* Conquest *mainly because of the poor graphics and slow playing. The screen is very poorly presented, with some very average looking characters which are all very colourful but result in lots of terrible clashes. I thought that the screen had a good 3D perspective but that didn't always act true. The game couldn't really make its mind up between an being arcade game or an adventure, and as a mixture it's terrible. There are much better budget games on the market. "*

● " I've seen so many games like this before that even if a really compelling one came along I don't think I could get enthusiastic about it. The graphics are about average for this sort of game: lots of flicker, colour clash and poorly detailed characters. A nice touch is the way in which your character looks at you every now and then as if to say: 'what's going on?' The sound is slightly above average with lots of well placed spot effects and even an awful little tunette when the game finishes. Generally, as with countless other trite offerings

from MASTERTRONIC, I wouldn't really recommend this as there are many budget games around from the same company which are a lot better. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: very poor, slow response
Use of colour: lots of colour which sometimes results in colour clashes
Graphics: fine detail but occasionally too small
Sound: slightly above average
Skill levels: one
Screens: about 300
General rating: A passable game but there are better alternatives

Use of computer	47%
Graphics	42%
Playability	37%
Getting started	48%
Addictive qualities	35%
Value for money	42%
Overall	**39%**

DESERT HAWK

Producer: Players
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Michael Barnard and Steven Bough**

Once again you have the chance to prove yourself as a hero on the battlefield. In *Desert Hawk* you pilot a sophisticated helicopter over a particularly nasty part of the desert on a mission to rescue soldiers stranded behind enemy lines — remember *Choplifter*?. The risks are high; the chances of success, low. Only flying skills can decide the outcome.

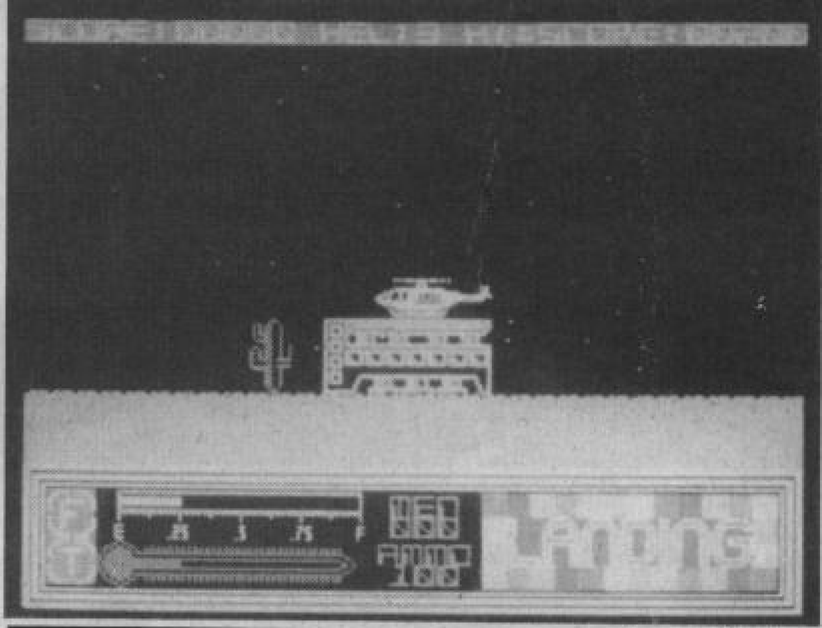
Under cover of darkness, the helicopter slowly rises into the sky. Silently, the chopper flies over the arid desert in search of the wounded men. The enemy have been expecting such a mercy mission, however, and have positioned defences to destroy the helicopter. A cannon fires lethal shells which are very hard to see in the half light. Shrapnel launchers are positioned rather too close to the pick-up zone. As you appear on their radar, missiles shoot out of the top of the shrapnel domes, to explode, spraying shrapnel everywhere. Only skilful manoeuvering prevents the helicopter from being blasted out of the skies.

On the higher levels, more sophisticated weapons are sent to stop your mission. The tanks can only fire shells to a certain height, but this makes them no less dangerous when you are coming in to land and pick up some comrades. The real weapons to avoid at all costs are the heat-seeking missile launchers. These missiles are attracted to the engine heat of the helicopter and go to any lengths to destroy the chopper, unless you can out-smart them with some pretty nifty flying. Contact with the missiles results in the destruction of the helicopter and the mission is prematurely terminated.

Only three soldiers at a time can be carried to safety. Once the chopper has been successfully landed, the allies run on to the screen and hop aboard. When three guys are inside, you must take off again and fly back to base before returning to pick up another batch. At each subsequent level the number of soldiers to be rescued increases by two, and the enemy weapon systems multiply.

The helicopter is equipped with a defence system — at the start of the game, the helicopter has one hundred missiles. These can be fired horizontally or dropped on to a target below, depending on the position of the helicopter. Points are scored in the game for picking up soldiers and these are displayed at the top of the main screen.

The Landing Computer display occupies the bottom of the screen. When the helicopter is in the correct position for a successful landing the colours around the edge of the landing screen stop rotating and the word 'LANDING' appears. If you try to land the helicopter before this has happened, it crashes. To the right of the screen there is the fuel and temperature chart. If things get too hot, the engine cuts out and you drift slowly towards the ground. Should the enemy be below the helicopter when this happens, it's curtains.



"Ready for take off?" "Aye, aye Captain Zeep"



Running out of fuel has a similar effect as overheating the engine.

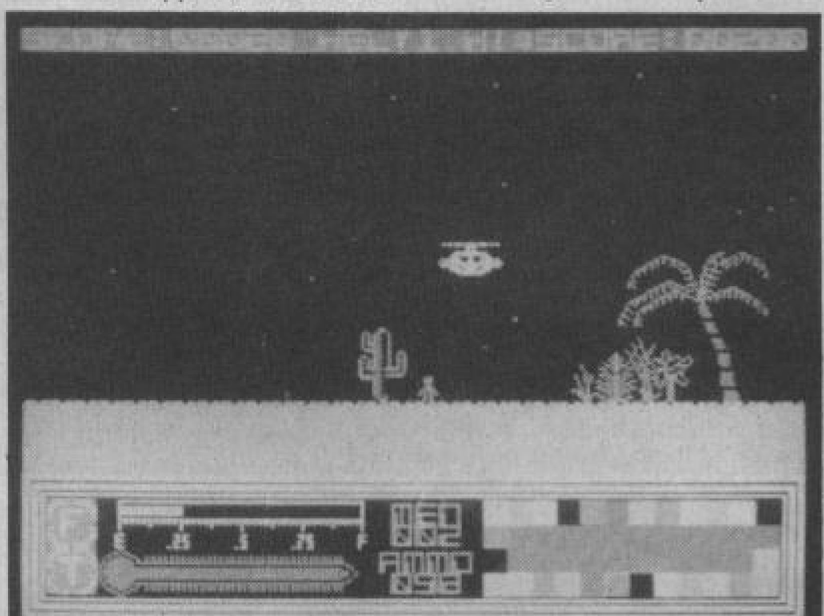
The screen scrolls sideways to give the impression that the helicopter is moving. Below, the desert with cacti and ancient relics passes by.

CRITICISM

● " Desert Hawk **is the sort of game that takes you back to the age when all Spectrum games cost a fiver and you had to take pot luck in the computer shop when you bought a game (the mighty pages of CRASH weren't available!). I feel that there is no real point to this one, as once you've completed the first bit, all the rest is the same. The graphics are full of attribute problems and they seem to suffer from inbuilt flicker. The sound, however, is fairly good: there are lots of spot effects and even a tuneful beep at the beginning of the game. The game itself is very tedious to play and also very primitive, so I wouldn't really recommend it, even for two quid. A bad start for PLAYERS I'm afraid. "**

● *" The presentation of* Desert Hawk *is good for a budget game. It's superior to the usual budget stuff but not as good as the* Spellbounds *of the budget world. I found the game was very similar to an old favourite,* Blue Thunder *— not just because it's a helicopter game but because the whole look of it is very similar. The way the helicopter moves around is very poor and, like the rest of the graphics, suffers from a very bad flicker when anything invades its character space. The sound is very basic and merely consists of a few blips here and there and a quite convincing whirr at the beginning of each game. The whole look of the game is very bright and full of colour but the graphics are not well drawn and the desert scenery is not very convincing. A nice try* PLAYERS, *but something a bit more playable next time please. "*

● " First impressions of *Desert Hawk* left me dying to get away from it. The controls are extremely unresponsive, and the whole thing felt as if it were one of those games that gives cheapies a bad name. It can become a little bit addictive after a while, but it doesn't really justify an expenditure of £1.99 to my mind. There are many better cheapies around. If I were you, I'd take my money to *Knight Tyme* or something like that. "



Bringing the chopper into land would be a good idea — mind you don't crash though . . .

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: pretty unresponsive
Use of colour: quite dull
Graphics: quite a lot of attribute problems
Sound: some nice spot effects and a realistic sound effect at the beginning
Skill levels: one
Screens: small scrolling play area
General rating: Not terribly exciting

Use of computer	48%
Graphics	52%
Playability	42%
Getting started	56%
Addictive qualities	47%
Value for money	47%
Overall	**47%**

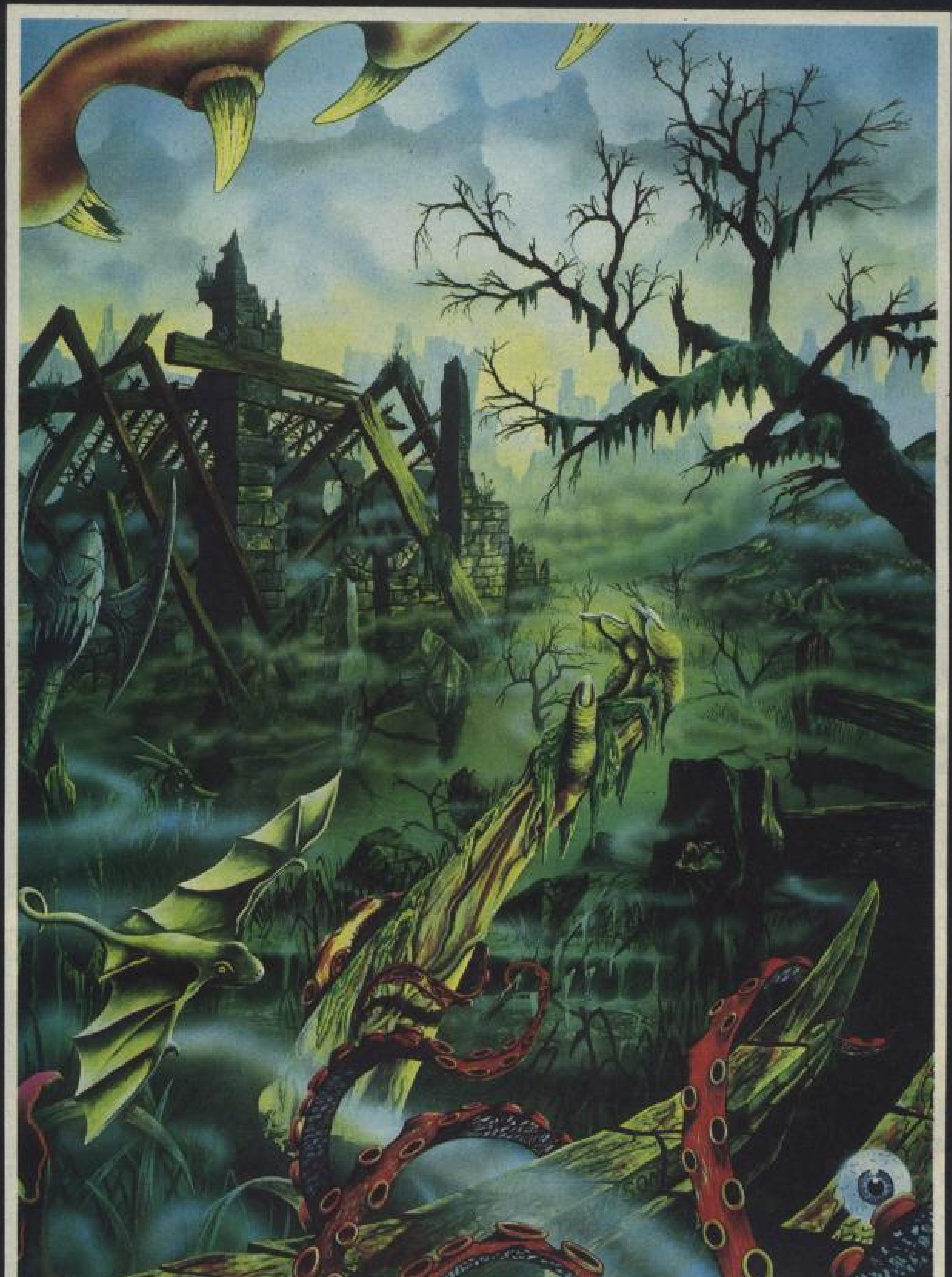
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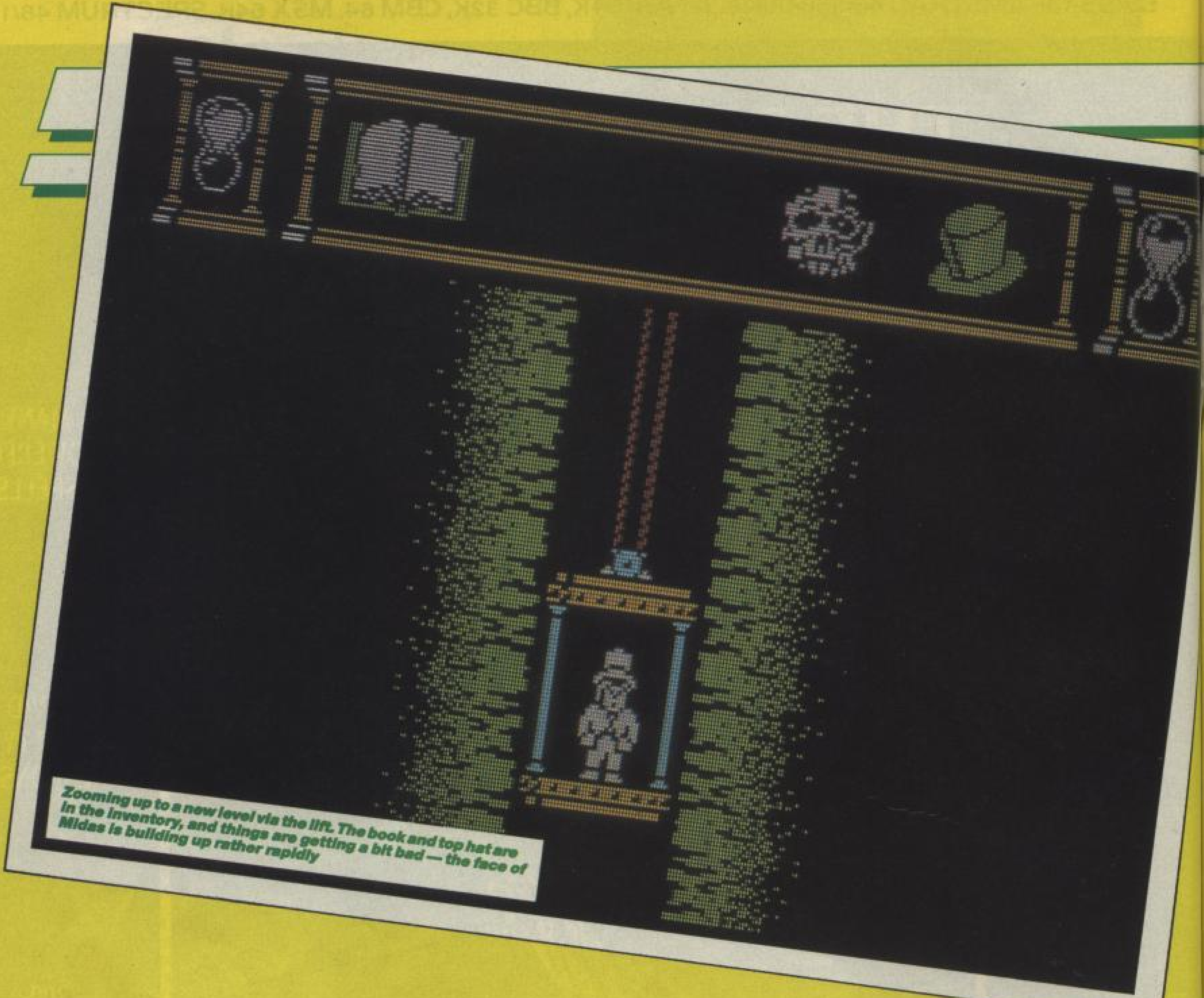
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Zooming up to a new level via the lift. The book and top hat are in the inventory, and things are getting a bit bad — the face of Midas is building up rather rapidly



An energy-sapping Star ... you've just fireballed a ... Goouch, it'll sproing back ... really low — the full cou...

Producer: Firebird
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **Odin Computer Graphics**

H·E·A·R·T·L·A·N·D

A CRASH Smash



For thousands of years a fierce battle has been fought between the forces of good and evil. During this war, the people of the Nether World were transported from their own dimension and imprisoned inside The Book, where the conflict with the evil demon Midas and his followers rages.

The Book, in which the people of the Nether World have been trapped, was sent into our dimension arriving on Earth for safe keeping until Midas is defeated. The tome has been passed down through the generations until, one day, it comes into your hands. Being an inquisitive sort of person you sit down for a good read. As your eyes skim the pages, drowsiness sets in. Unable to stay awake, you stumble to bed, fall into a deep sleep and start to dream of many strange things.

A lady dressed in white begs for help in rescuing her people, trapped in the lands contained in the weird dimension inside The Book. She tells you that the final chapter of The Book has been torn out and its six pages scattered through the lands, mixed up with six Dark Pages created by the forces of evil. The people from the Nether World can only be returned to their own dimension once The Book is whole again — the missing pages must be found and replaced. The six Dark Pages must also be destroyed to put paid to the powers of Midas once and for all.

The Lady in White transports you, bed and all, into the Heartland, and the mission to free the oppressed people of the Nether World begins. Although the reign of the evil Midas is on the wane, some of his fanatical followers still roam the Heartland and do their best to hinder progress.

Movement through *Heartland* is achieved by scampering Mad-Hatter style from screen to screen, being careful to avoid the holes in the ground — a fall means instant death. Providing the central character is facing left or right, he can leap in the air to catch floating objects. Doorways and lifts link screens and can be used by going 'into' or 'out of' the screen. The bed permits travel between the lands that make up *Heartland*, once pages of The Book have been collected.

On the quest for The Book and its elusive pages it is wise to collect a weapon or two along the way. Contact with any of the nasties or their weapons saps strength, and relying on acrobatic skills to stay alive isn't very clever. Weapons or objects are collected by jumping through them, whereupon they are added to the inventory in the status area at the top of the screen. The top hat is the least powerful weapon — three hits are needed to eliminate an enemy, but an unlimited number of throws is available. A knife is good for nineteen stabs, with most baddies dieing after two hits; the flaming powerball turns even the stubbornest baddie into dust and old bones with a single hit, but only lasts for nine shots.

The evil minions of Midas do their best to sap strength — and as they remove your life force, Midas gains energy and his grinning countenance grows in the inventory. Wizards fire lightning bolts of energy and can be a right nuisance. Goouches refuse to stay dead for very long, even after they've been reduced to bones on the floor, and rise up out of their remains to seek vengeance. Spacemen just hang around being irritating until they are killed.

Apart from evil minions, spells float around, some nice, some nasty. The large star spell homes in, saps energy and cannot be destroyed. Running away is a good move . . . Touching a small star spell confers temporary invincibility, while bubble clusters build up strength levels a little.

The passage of time in *Heartland* is shown by two revolving hourglasses, one on either side of the status area. The glass on the left revolves every couple of seconds, while the right hand hourglass takes about eight minutes to complete a revolution. Whenever you travel to another land the hourglasses reset, but tarrying longer than eight minutes in one land causes the Lady in White to run out of power. If the hourglass on the right is allowed to complete a revolution, it's game over.

First on the list of things to do has to be 'find a weapon' so that the score can be evened a little; then it's time to search out The Book and begin hunting for pages. To make life that little bit easier, The Book flashes when a missing page is in the vicinity — but pages still have to be found and identified. Only the Good pages must be added to The Book: the Bad pages have to be destroyed. Let's hope the Lady in White can hang on in there and keep you in this strange dimension until the task is completed.



r Spe tomes to hassle you now that nasty to a bag of bones. If that was a ack to any second. Energy is running ounte ce of Midas looms down

CRITICISM

" **Heartland in a way resembles the film, *The Never Ending Story* as the plot is based around a book. As with all the other ODIN games this is very playable and immensely compelling. The graphics seem to be a little more impressive than those on their last release: there is plenty of colour and the animation of all the characters is superb. The sound is also excellent with lots of spot effects during the game and a very jolly tune on the title screen. I strongly recommend this one as it is a very good piece of 'finished' software.** "

CRITICISM

" **The Spectrum has had its fair share of arcade/adventures, some good some bad, but we Spectrum owners have come to expect the best from ODIN. Heartland is definitely up to scratch. The graphics are superb, the tune at the beginning suits the game perfectly, and the addictiveness scores very high. When the game first loaded up I was sure that I was in for something special — the title screen is superbly drawn, and like the rest of the game includes lots of colour and few attribute problems. The whole look of the game is very smart it's beautifully animated and very involving. Your average arcade adventurer will love it, but your old shoot em up fanatic may find it a bit boring after the effect of the graphics has worn off.** "

CRITICISM

" **This is a very nice game. The graphics are fabulous, and the animation is really rather neat. The things like wizards and Goouches (mis-spelt cricket players?) are great, and the game itself is very attractively designed. Playability-wise,** Heartland **is very good indeed, and it's also addictive. Lots of things combine to make this one of the better games on the Spectrum. Another credible release from the people who brought you** Nodes, Ark, and Robin O' The Wood. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: top row to fire, Q-P into screen or jump when facing left or right, A-L out of screen, alternate keys on the bottom row left/right
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: a bit awkward
Use of colour: no clashes, a bit sparsely used
Graphics: excellent animation
Sound: spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 256
General rating:

Use of computer	91%
Graphics	93%
Playability	92%
Getting started	90%
Addictive qualities	93%
Value for money	89%
Overall	92%

ACTION REFLEX

Producer: Mirrorsoft
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Christian Urquhart**

Another ballgame with a difference! The central character in this game is a chequered ball which has been trapped inside a linked sequence of three mazes. The sphere has to be guided through the whole course three times in all, each trip through the mazes more difficult to make, before freedom is won.

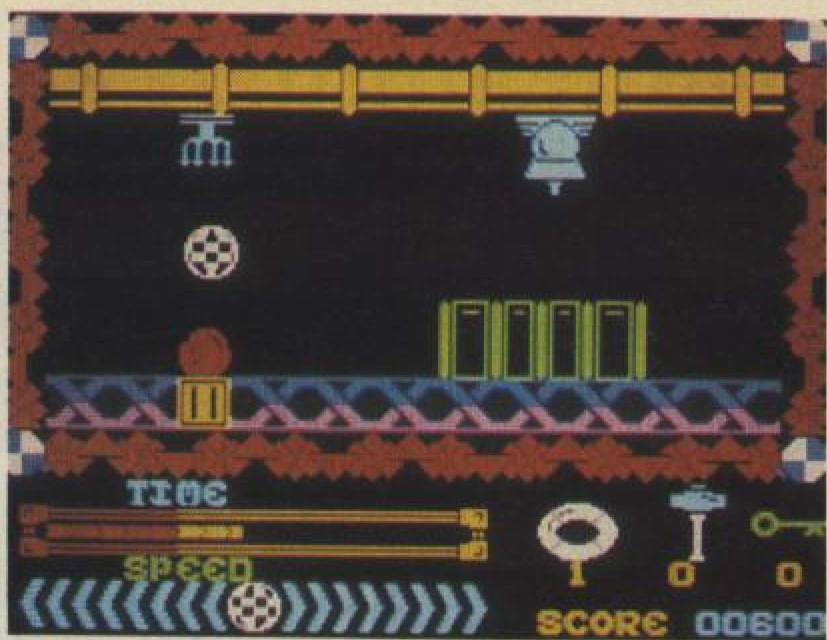
Like most balls, the star of *Action Reflex* can roll along the floor — in this flip-screen playing environment, to the left or right. Bouncing is also in the repertoire: holding the fire button makes the Round One bounce higher and higher until maximum bounce has been achieved. The game is played against the clock, represented by a chart at the bottom of the screen. As time progresses a yellow pointer gradually moves towards the red danger zone, and if the current section of maze is not completed before the time limit expires, it's curtains.

A variety of static and mobile obstacles must be avoided or evaded: bullets are shot from the ceiling; boxing gloves punch the spherical hero skywards, impaling it on dangerous looking spikes; magnets lure the bouncing ball to the top of the screen and hold it immobile until a dart comes along. Nearer ground level, drains suck the ball downwards and pools of water lurk in which unsuspecting balls can easily drown. Air vents whoosh the ball upwards through a vacuum delivery system and suck it along overhead pipeways to deliver the reluctant prisoner back to an earlier part of the maze. Whenever the ball is burst, time is lost and play restarts from one edge of the current screen.

Some objects in the game can be of use to your little bouncing chum on its travels. These are not collected on the journey as in most arcade adventure games, but are awarded automatically according to the number of points that have been amassed. Points are dotted around the maze in a variety of denominations, and are collected by rolling through or bouncing onto them. Once five hundred points are nestling comfortably in your pocket, a rubber ring is thrown your way. This makes it possible for the ball to pass unscathed over a stretches of water. Seven hundred points is the price of a hammer that comes in very handy for breaking down one of the glass walls blocking off explorable areas of the maze. A key is slipped into your possession when nine hundred points have been collected, and can be used to unlock underground chutes that provide safe passage through tricky areas. These items can only be used once, and icons in the status area keep track of the quantity of each of the tools in stock.

When a direction key is pressed and held, the ball gathers speed and two sets of chevron arrows under the time display give a readout of the speed of travel. Releasing a key allow the ball to slow down and come to rest — there are no brakes! The speedometer is useful when judging large leaps or when avoiding bullets and spurts of flame which suddenly erupt from cracks in the floor.

When time runs out, the game ends and a result screen pops into view to report on progress. Better luck next time, eh?



Cameron's been practising his action photography — here's a snap of the ACTION REFLEX ball in mid flight, as it travels towards a set of ceiling spikes after being biffed by a boxing glove

CRITICISM

● **" The preview copy of** Action Reflex **looked very entertaining so I've been waiting for the proper copy for a few weeks now. I am not at all disappointed. This game has a really good feeling about it that keeps you playing: there are lots of nice graphical touches which help, like the bulge in the pipe when you are shot up it. The graphics are very near perfect — all the characters are very well animated and the scenery is very well drawn. My only niggle is that there is a touch of colour clash on the more colourful screens. The use of colour is excellent throughout the game, and is never garish. The sound is fairly average but there are some nice spot effects. A very playable and addictive game which I can recommend strongly. "**

● *" At first sight this game seems like* Bounder, *but viewed from the side. After playing a few goes, I soon realised that* Action Reflex *also has good depth to it that should keep any arcade player at the Spectrum for ages. The game is very playable and extremely addictive. Although* Action Reflex *has some old ideas, taken as a whole, the game format seems quite original, and is lots of fun to play. The ball moves around the screen very smoothly, although I feel it moves more like a stone.* Action Reflex *is definitely a move in a new direction. "*

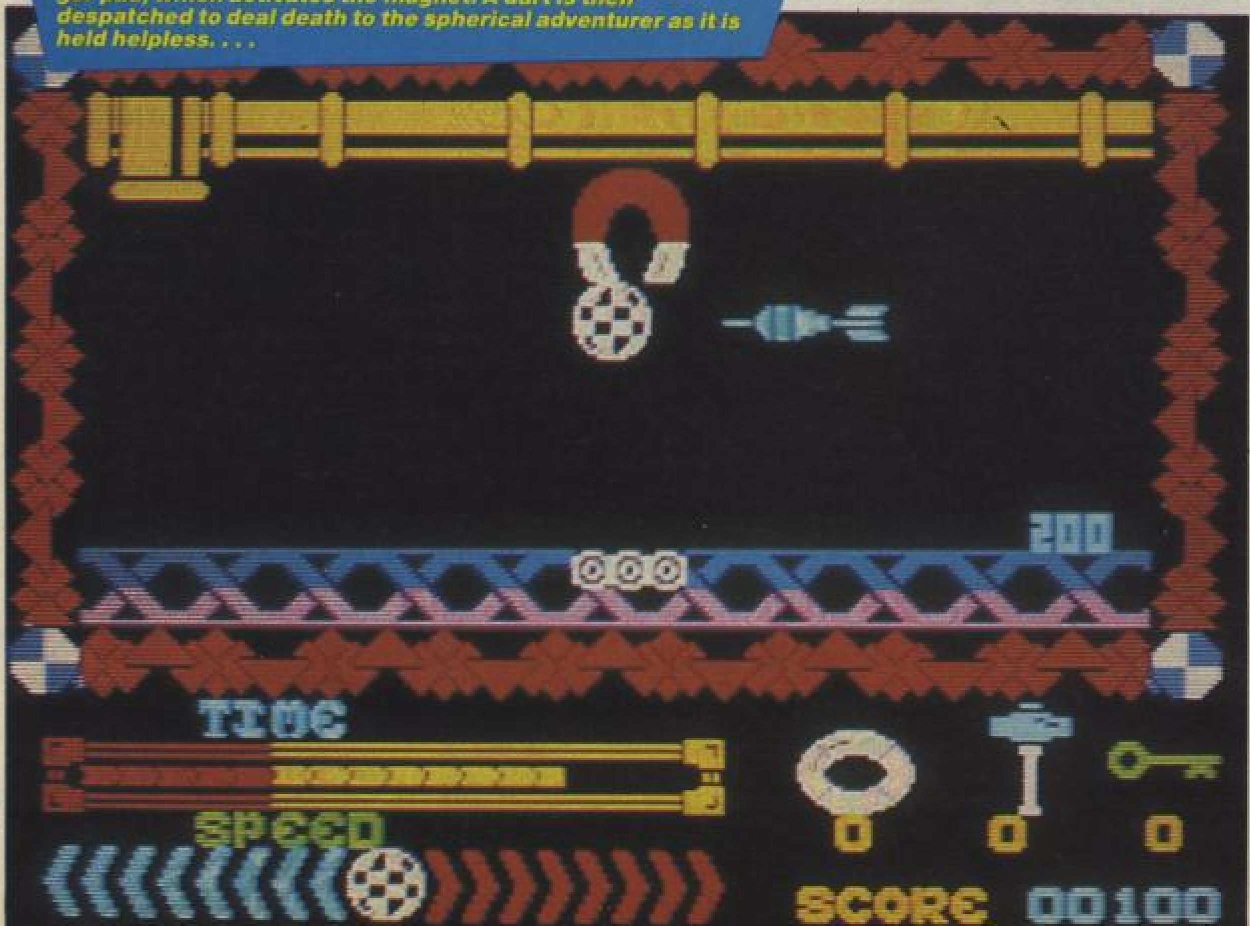
● " Neato! Lots of colour, and very nice graphics make *Action Reflex* very attractive visually. The loading method is very clever, but the loading screen is not particularly brilliant. I found it very playable, and despite the continual frustration, it also seems to be pretty addictive. The colour and graphic style is reminiscent of Chris Urquhart's last game, and very good it is too. Though not absolutely stunning, this game is a lot of fun: I like it. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z left, X right, SPACE increase bounce, P pause, Q quit
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: no problems
Use of colour: very attractive
Graphics: nice animation, lots of detail
Sound: good effects
Skill levels: one — gets progressively harder
Screens: 75
General rating: A very good game, frustrating at times but addictive

Use of computer	88%
Graphics	88%
Playability	86%
Getting started	88%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	88%
Overall	88%

Another action snap. The unwary sphere landed on that trigger pad, which activates the magnet. A dart is then despatched to deal death to the spherical adventurer as it is held helpless. . . .





The summer weather has certainly caught up with Ludlow — even with all the windows open, the office is like a sauna and one or two sets of knees (including Roger Kean's) have recently been treated to the light of day, now that shorts have become acceptable dress in the Towers.

I sit here slaving over a hot Hermes, without the prospect of a cool canned drink to soothe me: members of the Ludlow Mafia have abandoned protection rackets (temporarily) in favour of self-preservation, and were spotted marching across the Bull Ring clutching the entire stock of iced pop held by the Ludlow Newsagents. Any sploshes or blodges found on these pages this month have nothing to do with Tony Lorton from Art — he's sunning his knees on a week's holiday — they all come from my own moist brow.

WINGE *MOAN* COMPLAIN

Dear Crash
Is it my imagination or are we all turning into moaners? People never seem to stop complaining about the price of this and 'oh, what a waste of money that was.' Is this what computers are doing to people? I do hope not. I am sure that people can put their moaning to more important use.

People moan about the price of software, but at the back of their minds most of them realise that it is their software piracy that has sent prices soaring. Yes, MASTERTRONIC can survive and seem to go from strength to strength, but how could software houses like ULTIMATE 'go budget' when they are only producing about five games a year?

People moan about buying games that are either pathetic, too easy or too difficult. The pathetic games can't be excused, although maybe DOMARK would disagree. I believe that the time will soon come when there is no longer any room for the software houses that constantly produce pathetic and much hyped software.

The difficulty of games is a difficult, much talked about and much moaned about subject. The problem is, how do you decide the difficulty level of a game when there are five million Spectrum owners with very much differing game playing ability?

The software houses moan about a slump in sales, but this is a trend which has spread as far as the record industry who are suffering from single sales hitting rock bottom and record companies placing adverts between tracks on albums; is the computer industry heading for this?

Anyway, I am enjoying my computing more than ever and that's all that matters isn't it?
John Pinkney, Gosforth, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

What a refreshing world-view you have, John. Here's Twenty Pounds worth of software as author of Letter of the Month to help you continue enjoying computing.
LM

'DISGUSTED' Sudbury

Dear Lloyd
I have just been reading your letters and to tell you the truth I'm disgusted!!!!

If all people want to do is complain about your magazine why the bloody hell do they buy it!
Philip Green, Newton Green, Sudbury

There's nothing wrong with constructive criticism when it is applied appropriately, like your comments Philip!
LM

MOANING MUMMY

Dear Lloyd
I am writing for your advice on a problem I have about when I go to buy games. When I have enough money to buy a game I yell 'Just goin' to buy a game' and my mum answers, 'Oh! you're not going to buy a GAME are you?' Alarmed at this reply I say, 'Yes, what's wrong with that'. And then my mum comes up with the feeblest reason I've ever heard: 'But, But, You've got games, why don't you play with them' And so this goes on, I'm just told that games are not worth the money (and some aren't), and that I must put the money in the bank, but surely buying an odd game now and then won't hurt, it's not as if I'm always buying games, only when I see something that looks good (and I've played it to make sure it's all right.) Then I'm told that I can't buy the game, and that I should get something else. Have you got an answer on how I can explain my point of view, as all my previous attempts have failed.
Thanks a lot.
Timothy Jones, Wallasey, Merseyside

Try putting it in terms of of books, records or videos. Just because you've got a lot of books on the shelf doesn't mean that you should keep reading them again and again. If all else fails, at the risk of being branded horrendously sexist, why not try playing dirty — remind your Mum that's she's got lots of clothes next time she complains about 'having nothing to wear' to a posh do . . . The next letter puts part of another side of a similar story.
LM

DISAPPOINTMENT

Dear Lloyd
This is my first letter and it is for a good reason. I recently subscribed to CRASH. Today I got issue 30, as soon as I got it through I dived to open it for my free game. I was surprised to see I had no game, the package had not been opened so it had not fallen out. Please could you tell me what has happened to my game which is *Ghosts and Goblins.*
Stephen McGinley, Mountblow, Dumbartonshire

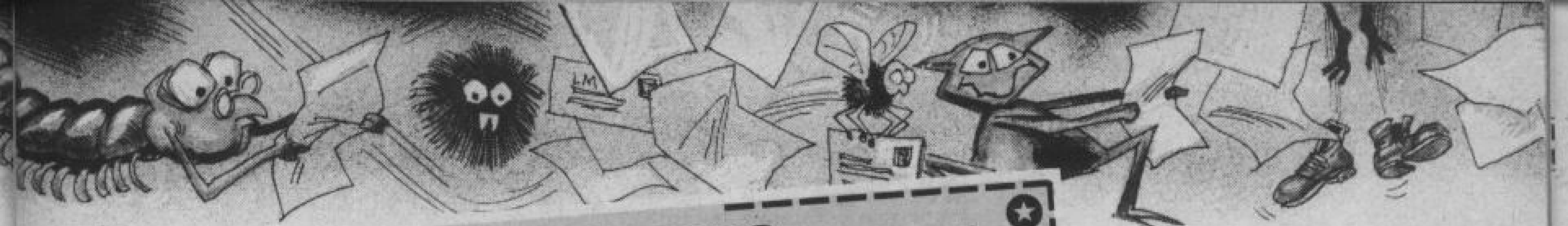
Sorry you were disappointed Stephen. Perhaps we should have made it a little clearer that tapes included in a subscription offer are sent under separate cover. The magazines are wrapped on special machines at our printers in Carlisle and put straight into the post. Auntie Aggie has to send games out in individually sealed Jiffy bags — and that takes a little longer. Judging by the next letter, it's just as well she does. . . .
LM

HUNTING MINSON

Dear Sir
The articles written by **Hunter S Minson** leaves a lot to be desired. Over the last few issues he seems to have taken to emphasising his prowess for consuming alcohol and food in vast quantities rather than commenting on the subject he is sent to cover.

I am not a spoil-sport or even a teetotaller and as I am overweight I too enjoy food, but CRASH is a computer mag not a Gourmet's guide to software launches. You do have some reponsibility to your young readers. If they start to think that is normal business practice they are in for a sharp shock. No-one is going to stand for 'vomiting on Volvos' We have already a hooligan element in the inner cities why condone it in print, if it is meant to be funny. IT IS NOT.
J A Attwood, Norwich, Norfolk

I don't think Mr Minson *is condoning the hooligan element — rather reporting on events in a journalistic style that evolved in America in the late sixties and early seventies — Gonzo Journalism — by which the writer took a very personalised, and often satirical view of events, distorting them in the course of reporting them. No one was 'vomiting over Volvos', any more than they were being encouraged to set off bombs in police stations by* Jack the Nipper. *How about some more views on Hunter S Minson's column?*
LM



PAGE THREE???

Dear CRASH
Please lend a serious and sympathetic ear to a group of female readers with a big query on — no! not sexual overtones this time — but something far more important — your magazine's sexist attitudes!

Please bear with us — fans of CRASH we may be but we feel we have a genuine complaint which deserves your serious consideration. Our feelings on the subject have been brought to a head by (of all things) the advent in your May issue of a real live female STAFF WRITER — Hannah Smith!

You can't imagine the furious arguments that have raged in our social circle since this amazing event took place.

Briefly, they amount to this. We girls are keen CRASH readers and enthusiastic Spectrum users though unlike so many of the boys of our acquaintance we don't go 'over the top' about either. (We feel that like men, computers have their uses but shouldn't be taken to extremes!) We've always been aware that women do not figure very noticeably in your mag. And we personally do not have any wild ambitions to figure in it ourselves (in spite of Lloyd Mangram's appeal last month for more female slimesters! YUK!)

We know of the existence of Ms Rosetta McLeod as a 'contributing writer' — if she in fact exists!) but to see listed a female 'Staff Writer' sent CRASH up several points in our popularity polls.

However our delight was short-lived when various male friends pointed out that the aforesaid HS no doubt actually exists but not as a 'Staff Writer'. They reckon she is in fact your answer to the popular press's Page 3 girl and that some guy on your staff does her writing! They add — rubbing salt in the wound that she is probably somebody's girlfriend or perhaps Graeme Kidd's Grand-Daughter — and that she has been introduced as a kind of token 'female' into a male orientated magazine!

If this is so, then shame on you. We have to admit a sneaking fear that they may be right — after all, the little write-up on Ms Smith was decidedly patronizing wasn't it? (Gorgeous, pouting etc etc) And what about Sean Masterson? Note his article on LOTHLORIEN in the April Issue — 'While the men do battle, the women (secretaries?) keep the home fires burning' That's the idea Sean — keep the women in their rightful place — backing up the dynamic men!

Our spiteful little male friends are quite certain that you will prove them right by not publishing this letter. We are seriously hoping that the author of that lively fanzine article is a real live female writer — and if you're really there Hannah (and the fellas allow you to have a look at this) — a big hello from some loyal fans! More power to your pen (or should it be your word processor!)
Helen Beckett, Sara Beckett, Lisette Menage, Liz Soanes, Sarah Gract, Becca Davies, Taunton, Somerset

Well you can give your spiteful little male friends a nice big pouting kiss — I published your letter. Consider Sean castigated (chauvinist strategenarian). Of course Hannah really exists, and really writes her column — unlike a certain 'rival' female Tipster. First me, then Rosetta, now Hannah — where will it all end?

Your spiteful friends are right in one respect only: by the law of averages (whatever THAT might be) Hannah probably is someone's girlfriend, but that someone isn't on the Newsfield staff, and isn't known to All Seeing Lloyd.
LM

ARROGANT ADVICE?

Dear Mr Mangram
I can't understand the winging schoolkids who say they can't afford all the CRASH Smashes each month, and therefore have to copy other people's tapes to play the games. Well if they save up and buy one CRASH Smash, by the time they have completed the game they will have saved enough to buy another one. There is no use stock-piling all the CRASH Smashes because if a game gets a Smash it is most likely a brilliant game that will get you hooked, so you won't have time to play any others.

As a working person, I could afford every CRASH Smash every month but I don't buy every one as playing every one of them to their full potential would be impossible. So stop moaning and start playing the games for what they are worth, you don't win prestige points for owning every CRASH Smash, with every one pirated.
Andi 'The Arrogant' Kirbyshaw, Greatham, Cleveland

Moderation in all things, is what my mother always used to tell me. Moderation in most things (except pay rises) is what I believe in. . . .
LM

PAGE THREE!!!

Dear Lloyd
If your mind is made up yet about having a 'ladies page' then why not ask the lasses to send in photos and make it a Page 3 special (If this is printed I shudder to think of the kind of 'nice' letters you'd receive. Unless you give my address)!

Next the 'neat' way Oli revamped this section. But is it obligatory to have grey splatters in the middle part (or any other part) of a letter (or even a rare poem)? Can't Oli get his brother Franco to look at his Air brush
Simon P Broder, 51 Marley Crescent, Marley Pots, Sunderland SR5 5BL

No wonder you see spots before your eyes Simon. I wouldn't be at all surprised if the palms of your hands were hairy, too!
LM

BEDEVILLED BY TEMPTATION

Dear Lloyd
I want to ask you a big favour. Please could you get the subscriptions department to redesign the plastic envelopes which carry issues of CRASH through the post to subscribers?

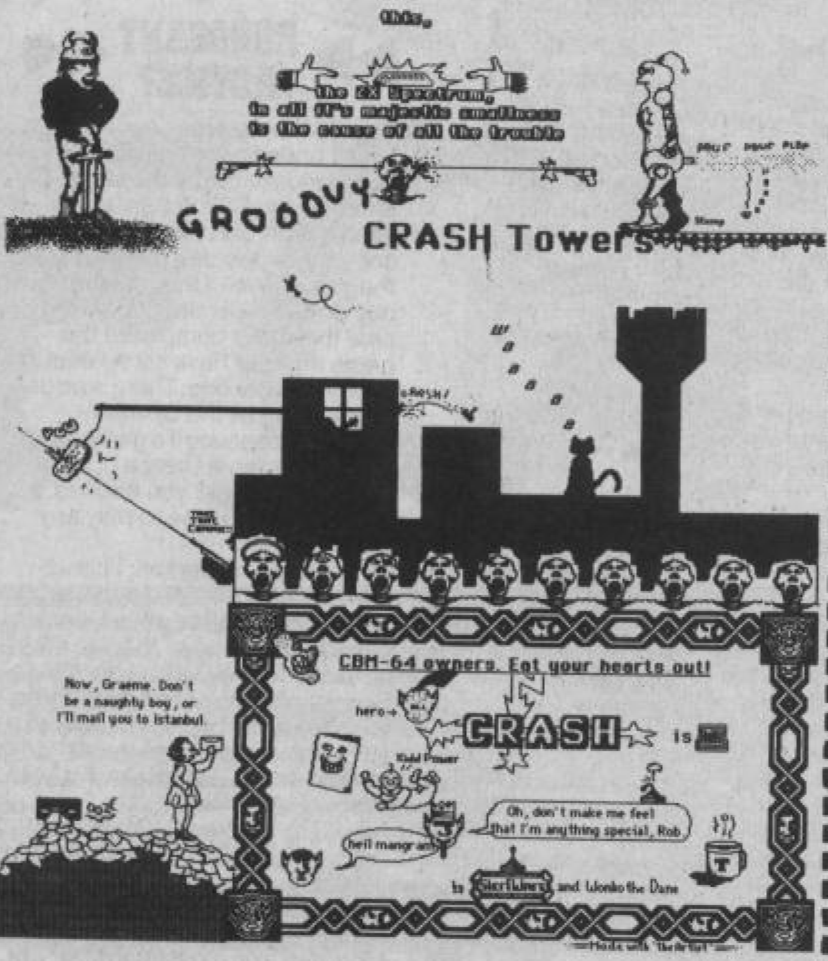
You see, I'm a postman, and around the 20th of the month one of the houses on my round receives an issue of CRASH by subscription, six or seven days before I have got mine. So far, I have resisted the temptation to open the envelope up and pore over CRASH's wonderful contents, but this act of denial can not continue for much longer as my will-power is rapidly diminishing.

Therefore either ask the 'subs Dept' to make the plastic folder open at one end or make the envelope a plain brown one so the temptation to open is kept to a minimum.
Yours Truly, The postman off the Maxwell House Advert, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear

Plain Brown Envelopes indeed! Whatever would people think. Keep resisting the temptation postie — if you are a subscriber, try asking your colleagues to help you out by ensuring your personal copy arrives as promptly as possible.
LM







SMORGASBORD

To Ye Crashe Towers

We are two thirteen year-old Danish boys, who are ardent admirers of CRASH. Therefore, we have decided to send you a picture, wot we drew ourselves on a Spectrum and then downloaded onto a Mac with the help of an Interface 1, 5 nails, 2 metres of wire, pliers and a sledgehammer, as the best printer was on the Mac.

Wonko the Dane, Vorbasse

A PIMANIAC WRITES

Dear Cwashy

If you start giving Smashes to games that are innovative, and to them only, I will make you play THE GREAT SPACE RACE! That would be a bloody stupid thing to do (the Smashes, stoopid), because innovative games can be SO unplayable (Hi MEL), and computers are there for enjoyment, not farting around saying how good innovative games are. I have met, and had numerous conversations with **Mel Croucher**, and he strikes me as very intelligent, so Mel don't waste it building up enemies. (I am still a devoted PIMANIAC, my number is 35. Maybe us PIMANIACs should meet at a Microfair).

I have noticed a few things about games ads. Smaller, independent companies (**GARGOYLE, MOSAIC, AUTOMATA**) have better ads. They are funny, can give clues or are plain entertaining. But ads by **OCEAN, ELITE** et al are dead boring, often badly drawn (*Legend of the amazingly Badly Drawn Women*) and are generally useless, except **MIKRO-GEN** (HI OLI!). this is another sign of how much 'nicer' indie companies are. I recently led, sorry, read a letter in PCW (I think) about someone who couldn't get his chewed up copy of *Golf* (by **ARGUS PRESS SOFTWARE**) replaced. I had a similar problem of *Technician Ted* being chewed up, but it got replaced for no fee or problems, with a friendly reply from the **HEWSONS**, so that shows how more pleasant these companies are (and it shows in their games).

DOGS (dogs?). Why are doggies being used in games and ads now. The first was PIDO, but there's now PODDY, the OFFOG, the *Pyracurse* doggy and BONZO, from *Jack the Nipper*. And of course doggies in *Trashman* and *Saboteur*. Why? When will there be the first doggy hero?

Luv Bones, (Fellow PImaniacs please write) 152 Wellsway, Bath Avon BA2 4SE

No wonder you've got a Fido Fixation with a name like that. DOGGY HEROES? Well, there's an idea. Games with bite. Perhaps the Lassie licence is yet to be snapped up? Would a dog licence be the result?

LM

TAKEBACK PROBLEMS

Dear Lloyd

HELP! Do you know, by any chance, the address of **CRL** or **SILVERSOFT**? I'd like to send them my copy of *Bored of the Rings*, as it doesn't load. But the ads don't carry the address; the inlay card doesn't help, either. Any clues, please?

Do you think you could ask the Ed (blessed be his name etc) to INSIST that all companies put an address on their ads? It's a bit stupid of them to leave it off — it doesn't take up that much space, and it IS essential. If your local computer store doesn't stock the game, you can't buy it! Really sensible, eh? (OK, forgot CRASH Mail Order, but you wouldn't replace my copy, would you? I didn't get it from you!)

Incidentally, surely a computer store should undertake to replace all non-loading copies indefinitely. Our local store says that after 2 days, you've had it — you'll have to send it to the company.

Yours pseudomorphically

(LMLWD), John Yeates, St Clement, Jersey

Sounds like another knock-on effect of piracy. The Sale of Goods Act, quite clearly states that goods should be fit for the purpose for which they were sold, and if loading into a computer and playing is what a computer game is sold for, then you should be able to obtain a refund or working replacement from the shop after two days has elapsed.

Sadly, some people have no doubt been treating some retailers as libraries and copying software then deliberately damaging tapes so that they won't load. The 'returns' procedure by which retailers send faulty tapes back and receive credit from the distributor, rather than the software company also complicates the retailer's life.

Thus more and more shopkeepers are insisting that non-loading tapes be returned to the manufacturers for examination before parting with cash or alternative titles by way of replacement. It might be worth nagging the shop a little more, or maybe taking your Spectrum and tape recorder in with you ... but here's CRL's address anyway:

CRL, CRL HOUSE, 9 King's Yard, Carpenters Road, LONDON E15 2HD

LM

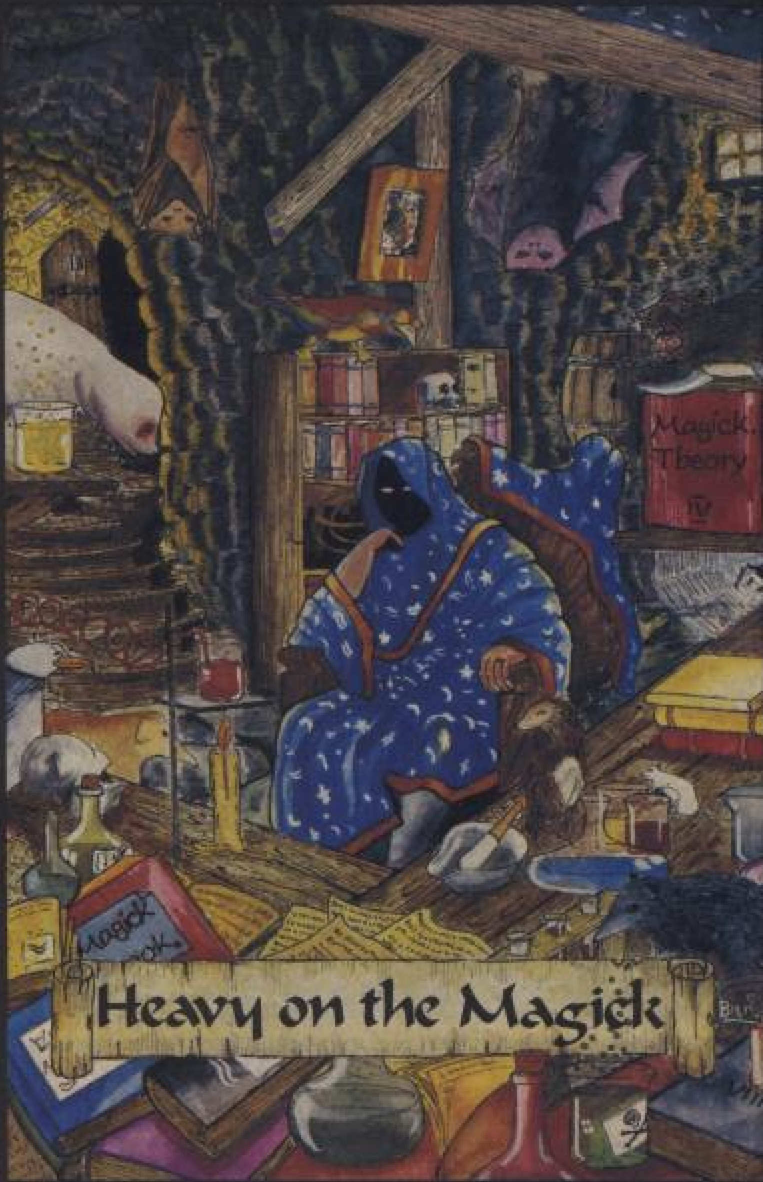
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INFOGRAMES



The Valente Papers

1

Dear Lloyd
I feel I must reply to a couple of points raised in S Valente's letter (Issue No 30). He said that ULTIMATE has 'gone to the dogs' so to speak, and that their latest releases have been a load of crap. This is a very unfair statement, although I must agree that *Nightshade* was not up to ULTIMATE's standard. BUT how can they get away with saying that *Gunfright* is a load of rubbish too? I think that *Gunfright* is one of ULTIMATE's best and I think that a quick glance through the back copies of CRASH Hotline Top 30 says the lot. Also, who would be foolish enough to pay the least bit of attention to a second rate mag like PCW (sorry LM!) that said that *Cyberun* was also very poor.

Cyberun in my humble opinion is sheer brilliance, so is *Pentagram* and I think you will agree with me too, right LM? So before S Valente or anyone else starts slagging ULTIMATE off, I suggest that they play the games first and then form their own views (But that would be asking too much of you Mr Valente, wouldn't it?)

I've got one more gripe to make, and it's on CRASH (gosh horror!!). Yes, I mean **Hunter S Minson**. Who is this stupid little prat? I think his 'fantasy' stories on orgies of gutsing and boozing are very boring to say the least. Personally I don't care if he had a chip buttie or chicken in soya sauce. What he writes (?) is a load of irrelevent tripe, and he can try and rip out my liver if he wants to as well. But I digress. Please LM you complain about lack of space, why not get rid of him and use the page for something 'a little more constructive'. Blackmail Mr Kidd by hiding his Doc's or something but get rid of Minson!!!!

Well I've said enough! I hope your runner beans are coming along well and I wish Hannah Smith the best of luck in her 'Duel to the Death'.

Mr C H Evans, Powys, Wales

In reverse order: For some reason, they seem a little reluctant to flourish this year, but thank you for your kind interest; removing Mr Kidd's Docs is not something to be taken lightly, his feet have a lot in common with Tom Thug's pedal extremities; the ULTIMATE question seems to have no ultimate answer.

LM

2

Dear Lloyd
I have decided to write (well I typed actually) to you on the subject raised by S Valente in the JULY issue of CRASH. He says that he thinks that reviewing poor games is just a waste of time and space and if they must be reviewed at all it must be very briefly. But on the contrary, I feel you should review them. Not just to show readers some of the poor games out at the moment so as to maintain a balance between good and poor games, but so as to keep readers aware to the fact that there is some real rubbish out there and they must steer well away from it. Besides, I find it quite amusing to sit back and read about some pathetic new game getting totally slagged from all quarters. Maybe that doesn't say much for me but if Software companies are going to turn out this load of complete and utter MUCK then you as decent and fair reviewers have every right to give it a good going over. And it is only fair that us sitting at home should be warned not to buy the rubbish.

Take US GOLD for example. They did exceedingly well. They produced game after game, every one of them excellent and of the highest standards. BUT then in March they released the long awaited *Zorro*. You reviewed it that month and gave it an overall 53%. A bit of a let down for US GOLD. Then in the July edition of CRASH I noticed a review of the infamous *World Cup Carnival*. 26% it said at the foot of the page. I read the review and nearly passed out when I discovered it was by US GOLD.

Now, had CRASH not reviewed these games and thus not informed the every day peasant of the disgusting quality of these games many people may have rushed out thinking: "US GOLD have released the long awaited *Zorro*. Must buy it . . ." £8 down the drain THEN:
"US GOLD have released *World Cup Carnival* . . . Must buy that too because US GOLD write excellent programs . . ." £10 down the same drain . . . (with the game following close behind). Only people who don't buy CRASH would have bought those games and THEY deserve all they get. (HAH!!!)

So what I am saying is you must keep printing the BAD! games so's we know what NOT to buy. Like I always say 'FOREWARNED IS FORARMED' (or summink like that.)

Jan Cook, West Ashling, West Sussex

Just because a company releases a bad game or maybe two bad games in a row, doesn't mean all their releases are going to be bad. The converse is also true — which is why we will continue reviewing bad games in with the good.

Buying games on the strength of a company's past reputation is not always a sound policy, as you so clearly illustrate Jan. Reading reviews, or at the very least getting a demo of a game from the shop (or asking a friend) is always the soundest policy before parting with with that hard-earned commodity, money

LM

3

Dear Lloyd
I am writing to you with regard to S Valente's letter published in Issue no 30's FORUM. Mega-drivel are the only words fit to describe it. He/She or IT whichever the case may be, has not only wasted the ink in IT's pen, but the space in your previously un-scathed forum, and the time of many readers.

The first point made concerned software delays. I suppose any future software published by S Valente would arrive dead on schedule without any hiccoughs. Unforseen circumstances do have a tendency to crop up occasionally you know, like Bugs in the program, illnesses, favourite Grandma's funeral. They are bound to upset even the strictest schedules.

Point 2: Subscription delays. More unforseen circumstances and more S, H, one, T from S Valente, the reader with the IQ smaller than the Valente shoe size. Distributing thousands upon millions of magazine's each month can't be the easiest job in the world. Snags, again, will occur: this cannot be helped. Subscribers such as myself just have to accept it. If their magazine is late, fair enough, it's not as if it's a deliberate mistake. After all nobody's perfect, least of all S Valente.

Point 3: ULTIMATE's downfall. More mega-drivel. I wish S Valente would suffer a downfall, preferably off a short cliff. To me, ULTIMATE are the world's top software producers. If their programmers are prepared to spend months polishing a game up to the extent they do, then surely they are entitled to re-use an idea. If S Valente dislikes any ULTIMATE software I will be only too pleased to receive it, as being unfortunate enough not to own a Swiss bank account, the miserly income at my disposal means I can ill afford to purchase more than one game every two months. Where would us games players be without ULTIMATE? No *Gunfright*s *Alien 8*s or *Sabrewulf*s to mention a few; life just wouldn't be worth living. I can't think of one ULTIMATE game reviewed in CRASH which has failed to receive a Smash.

Point 4: Fair enough my tape recorder's hardly technologically advanced (Taiwan-ologically advanced is nearer) but all the same I do have problems with turbo loaders. I manage though mainly by exchanging the game for a new copy (thanks MICRO-FUN in Barnsley for being so co-operative over this.) As for removing the Lenslok code . . . pah! Now that is 'pure unadulterated crap' for you. The percentage of people who can do this must be microscopic (a good word for describing S Valente's brain capacity). In fact if prices weren't so high, piracy levels would also fall which brings me to the next point.

Point 5: Discount software. This is the only point I agree with but then again, what's wrong with cheap software?

Point 6: Reviews. If it weren't for CRASH reviewing 'dross games' then there would be a sight more divvies buying them. I unfortunately am one such divvy but after purchasing several trash games, the ones CRASH don't give a good review don't get bought (or pirated for that matter.) Another thing, not many programmers are so talented that they can release their first game and then have the privilige of sitting back, watching it climb the charts whilst reaping in the royalties. Remember, no-one's perfect and everyone has to start somewhere. You never know, one of next month's CRASH Smashes may have been written by the author of one of last months 'dross games' keep it up CRASH, and ULTIMATE. 10 out of 10 so far, with or without subscription delays.

Jonathan Dale, (Yorkshire and proud of it!), Haylandswaine, Sheffield

Such vitriol! S Valente might have very large feet, for all you know Jonathan . . .

LM

GIRLIE TAKEOVER?

Dear Lloyd
I feel I must warn you that CRASH is being taken over by women. There are at least four female members of staff named in the magazine and God knows how many more there are lurking in the canteen at NEWSFIELD waiting to overpower you and turn CRASH into another woman's monthly full of knitting patterns and recipes.

I only hope this warning does not come too late as I observe that already Robin Candy's position has been taken over by a woman who insists on printing POKEs to make games harder, I suggest you take my advice and confine the female members of your staff to making the tea and pushing the hoover around, which is after all what they're here for isn't it? And meanwhile us men can get on with the more intellectually demanding business of playing the computer games and writing magazines.

Mr P Schofield, Marple Bridge, Stockport

Don't 'us men' me, Mr Schofield. All Mr Liddon was here for was making tea and pushing the hoover round, so some people believed, and he achieved a great deal more, going on to be half a software house. I really can't see what people like you are here for, Mr S, unless it's to learn how to spell words like 'intellectually' before using them. I am very tempted to pass your address onto the next correspondents . . .

LM

HEARTLAND





MESS OF POTTAGE

Dear Lloyd
I just thought I would make my opinion known about the layout of CRASH. In reply to Douglas Robertson's letter in July's issue of CRASH, I totally disagree with him, all reviews should be like the Smashes: colourful and very nice to look at, even if the review itself is not that kind. Strangely, I find that I feel that it is my duty to read all of your wonderful magazine, even to plough through the boring 10% overall reviews. The least CRASH can do is make them look nice.

I'd like to say a few things about the divisions of CRASH into sections eg CRASH Course, Adventure Trail, etc. BORING! Why don't you just spread these sections throughout the magazine as you do with the arcade and arcade/adventure reviews. All you need to do is state what type of game it is at the top of the page.

Many improvements have recently been made to CRASH: On the Screen and the Homegrown Software section — I will be sending off for my copy of *Supernova*. Hannah Smith has added a touch of class to the Playing Tips section and she also looks much more attractive than Robin Candy.

The 'GENESIS, Birth of a Game' competition the best competition idea I have seen yet, which provides both fame and fortune to the lucky (and talented) entrant. But what a stupid time of year to have it, just in the middle of the exam season, I personally have had a brilliant and original idea for a game but I have not had time to develop it. And I have only had end-of-year exams. I feel sorry for the CSE/O level and A level takers who probably could have thought of a better idea than mine.

Robin Grant

The people up in ART are always trying to dream up new ways of making CRASH more attractive, but the physical limitations on the printing in combination with our printer's deadlines mean that all the pages can't be as colourful as the Smashes.

Designing a magazine is rather like serving a meal — admittedly some people like a straightforward stew, or Mess of Pottage, but most folks like their greens on one part of the plate, the mash on another and the meat kept separate with a generous dose of tasty gravy poured over the lot. The Art Room tries to add the gravy and we keep the sections separate to make readers' lives easier. Vegetarians find it difficult to eat Irish Stew, but can avoid the meat in Meat and Two Veg . . .

LM

SLOBBER, DROOL

Dear Lloyd
Please stop dribbling on the FORUM pages, Issue No. 29.
Yours Soaked, Robert Phelyes, Stroud, Glos

Sorry. I was anticipating a pay rise (more fool me!). Actually the dribbles really belong to Tony Lorton up in art, he just don't know what to do when a paint pot gets knocked over.

LM

CONSISTENCY COMPLAINT

Dear Lloyd
Stand back and prepare for a barrage of criticism. One of the problems with CRASH at the moment is inconsistency (mind you, you are pretty consistent in ignoring all my letters). It seems that you are not sure what type of audience to aim at (compare John Minson's decidedly 'adult' style with the overtly childish Bug Box — has it gone for good? — Hall of Slime, LMLWD, and now the MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER), and end up with at times a rather pathetic mish-mash. This is also reflected in the FORUM which, as you yourself have acknowleged, occasionally degenerates into infantile triviality. I am not about to cancel my subscription or anything like that, because although the bad bits can be embarrassingly bad, the many more good bits can be exceedingly good. However I do feel it's time you opted for consistency and so I urge you to drop the puerile facets of CRASH; after all the average CRASH reader is a mature teenager. I know the computing industry is fairly light hearted, but it is possible to be witty or entertaining without being childish.

S G Young, Garrowhill, Glasgow

It all goes to show that you can't hope to please all of the people all of the time, and that playing with 'averages' leads to woolly thinking. There are three kinds of average for a start: Mean, Mode and Median, all usually quite different. Thus we have three types of 'average' CRASH reader.

What is 'puerile' or 'childish' to one reader may well be regarded as the best bit of the magazine to another, and the CRASH readership isn't as easily quantifiable is you might like it to be. The World Cup Carnival *or* Great Space Race *debates are the kind of debates that generate 'consistent', or one-sided responses, but look at the diversity of opinion on* ULTIMATE *games for instance. Try not to get embarrassed just because everyone else isn't as 'grown up' as you!*

LM

INS AND OUTS IN AGAIN?

Dear Lloyd

IN	OUT
Ghosts and Goblins	Rock 'N Wrestle
Shaded Alien 8 clones	Alien 8 clones
Hannah Smith	Matthew Smith
Jack the Nipper	Herbert Week
Starstrike 2	Space Raiders
Previews	Reviews
World Cup Carnival	World Cup Soccer
Diego MARADONA	ELITE's Basketball
Summer	Spring
Cruz's Boxing	McGuigan's Boxing
Alan Sugar	Robin Candy
Oliver Frey's Ear	Van Goff's Ear
Batman	Robin O' The Wood
128K Spectrum	ZX81
Streethawk 2	Streethawk 1
Bounder	Bounces
Bangles	Biggles
Bambi	Rambo
Match Point	First Blood PT11
Match Day	Match Day
Deuce	Match Point
	Cherry Coke.

'Jungle Jie', Royston, South Yorkshire

CATCH 128?

Dear Lloyd
You asked 128 owners to write in with their side of the story so here I am. First I'd like to say that the 128 is an excellent computer despite the 15% of 48K games that don't load. The music is brilliant and the games are longer because of the extra memory. *Knight Tyme* is a good example of a great 128 game. But people have been writing in and saying that if the software companies don't make enough games then they won't buy the computer. The software companies say that they are waiting for 128 sales to go up before they start making any decent games. This is a Catch 22 situation.

However, if more people bought the computer the software companies would make more games and everyone would be happy., Also seeing as the 128 Spectrum's price is down to £139 it isn't far off the old 48K's original price. And look how many people afforded to buy that? In my opinion, the 48K has reached its technical peak. The 128 leaves room for improvement. Look at it this way. If the 128 does as well as the 48K, CRASH will keep going for many more years to come.

Derin Agilgat, Thornton Heath, Surrey

No doubt the 128K Spectrum will catch on and sell in large quantities once it has been relaunched in time for Christmas. It seems certain the revamped version will have a cassette recorder on board, and may well include joystick ports — maybe all will be revealed at the PCW Show in September. Whatever happens, though, it's fairly certain that there's unlikely to be a shortage of new 48K games for a long time yet.

LM

That just about wraps it up for another month (PHEW!), and I'm off to find a cool patch of shade in the garden to recuperate from the broiling I've received sorting out this month's FORUM. Send your letters (and iced cans of pop) to LLOYD MANGRAM'S FORUM, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.

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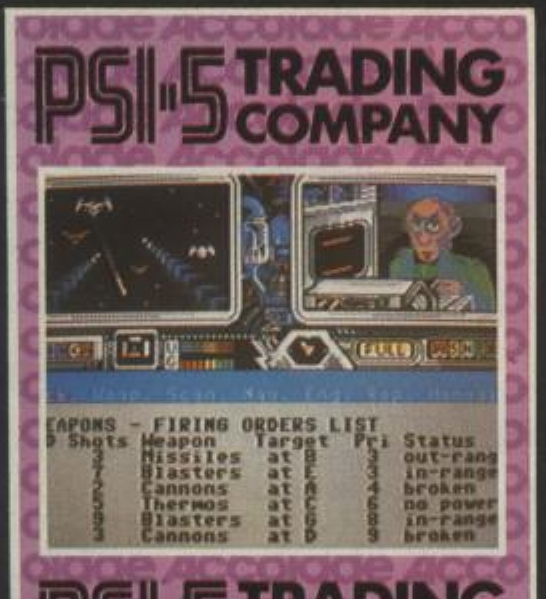
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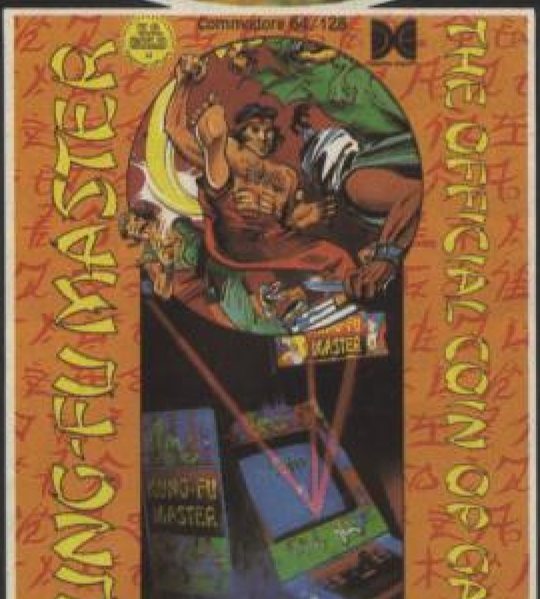
Rommel, the cunning Desert Fox, is on the rampage; sweeping across the desert sands, laying low the allied forces and swarming through allied territory. In DESERT FOX it is your mission to rescue North Africa from the grip of this awesome foe. You will need to be as wise and as cautious as the most battle hardened general in planning your strategy. If you fail, your final head to head conflict with the Desert Fox himself may be your last!

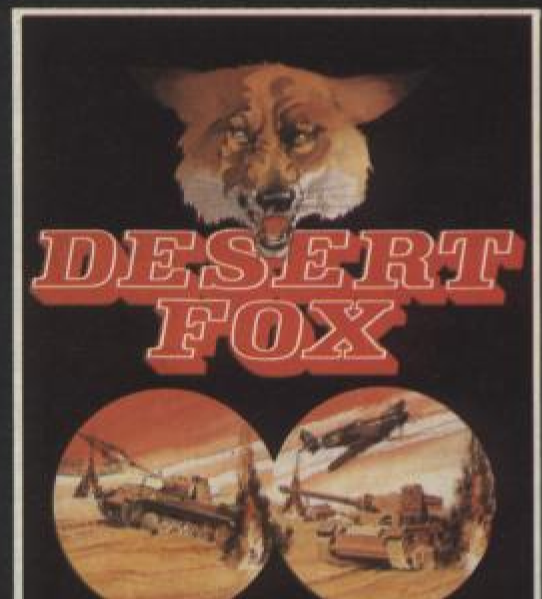


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TOP 30 FOR AUGUST

1 (1) COMMANDO **Elite**
2 (3) ELITE **Firebird**
3 (2) BOMBJACK **Elite**
4 (7) BATMAN **Ocean**
5 (6) GREEN BERET **Imagine**
6 (4) M.O.V.I.E. **Imagine**
7 (5) SPELLBOUND **Mastertronic**
8 (11) MATCH DAY **Ocean**
9 (30) QUAZATRON **Hewson**
10 (9) STARSTRIKE II **Realtime Software**

Half a dozen new entries displace a few games that were getting a bit long in the tooth in Hotline terms, with the highest new entry being achieved by SPINDIZZY from **Electric Dreams** this month. The top seven games shuffle around a bit, with **Elite**'s COMMANDO still well dug in at the top slot, but otherwise these guys seem to have carved out an area of the chart for themselves. Steve Turner's latest game, QUAZATRON from **Hewsons** sproings up from Thirty last month to Nine this month . . . is it on the way to the top? Perhaps a slightly disappointing showing for GHOSTS AND GOBLINS, which arrives at Number Twenty Six



11 (—) SPINDIZZY **Electric Dreams**
12 (21) TURBO ESPRIT **Durell**
13 (19) PING PONG **Imagine**
14 (12) EXPLODING FIST **Melbourne House**
15 (15) WAY OF THE TIGER **Gremlin Graphics**
16 (—) BOUNDER **Gremlin**
17 (16) CYBERUN **Ultimate**
18 (—) KNIGHT TYME **Mastertronic**
19 (—) HEAVY ON THE MAGICK **Gargoyle Games**
20 (24) SPY Vs SPY **Beyond**

21 (8) STARQUAKE **Bubble Bus**
22 (17) SABOTEUR **Durell**
23 (13) BACK TO SKOOL **Microsphere**
24 (—) PENTAGRAM **Ultimate**
25 (22) ROBIN O' THE WOOD **Odin**
26 (—) GHOSTS AND GOBLINS **Elite**
27 (10) GUNFRIGHT **Ultimate**
28 (14) HYPERSPORTS **Imagine**
29 (28) TOMAHAWK **Digital Integration**
30 (23) FAIRLIGHT **The Edge**

Paul Ackrill of Weymouth will soon be playing with forty pounds worth of super software, sent to him at no charge because he won this month's Hotline draw. CRASH Hats and T Shirts go to the fab four who are this month's runners up: **Gareth Clark** of Ascot (don't expect the hat to get you into the Royal Enclosure); **Connmac Evilly**, a Dubliner (don't swim in the Liffey wearing the shirt, Connmac); Craig Dodson of Burstwick, and Mark Artus from Wythenshawe. Well done to them all. It could be YOUR turn next month. . . .

The CRASH HOTLINE AND ADVENTURE CHART is Britain's most important popularity chart — for Spectrum Software, at least. The chart depends entirely on your support and we need your votes in order to produce the analysis of who's playing what.

Nowadays, there's only ONE WAY to submit your votes — and that's by post. Towards the back of the magazine, lurking very close to the competition results bit, you'll find a couple of coupons that you can use to send us your votes. If you're really unkeen on cutting up your magazine, you could always use a photocopy, or copy out the details on the forms onto a plain piece of paper.

Whatever you do, get those voting forms in. Every month we draw out a total of ten winning forms after the charts

ADVENTURE TOP 30 CHART



Gargoyle Games have a good showing this month for their new release HEAVY ON THE MAGICK — it appears in both charts, but does best of all in the Adventure section, jumping straight in to the Number Twelve slot as the highest new entry. KNIGHT TYME from **Mastertronic** does the same sort of thing, but not quite so well. REDHAWK from **Melbourne House** is the only other new game to make a debut appearance over here in the Adventure side of the chart — very old favourite, VALHALLA, from **Legend** is back near the bottom, and BORED OF THE RINGS from **Silversoft** leaps back into the middle proving that the joke's not over.

1 *(1)* LORD OF THE RINGS **Melbourne House**
2 *(3)* SPELLBOUND **Mastertronic**
3 *(2)* FAIRLIGHT **The Edge**
4 *(9)* THE HOBBIT **Melbourne House**
5 *(4)* LORDS OF MIDNIGHT **Beyond**
6 *(11)* FOURTH PROTOCOL **Century/Hutchinson**
7 *(5)* SWORDS AND SORCERY **PSS**
8 *(8)* RED MOON **Level 9**
9 *(7)* MARSPORT **Gargoyle Games**
10 *(16)* GREMLINS **Adventure International**

11 *(6)* DUN DARACH **Gargoyle Games**
12 *(—)* HEAVY ON THE MAGICK **Gargoyle Games**
13 *(10)* DOOMDARK'S REVENGE **Beyond**
14 *(—)* KNIGHT TYME **Mastertronic**
15 *(12)* ROBIN O' THE WOOD **Odin**
16 *(—)* BORED OF THE RINGS **Silversoft**
17 *(13)* SHADOWFIRE **Beyond**
18 *(15)* SHERLOCK **Melbourne House**
19 *(21)* ENIGMA FORCE **Beyond**
20 *(23)* DRAGONTORC **Hewson**

21 *(20)* SPIDERMAN **Adventure International**
22 *(18)* FRANKIE **Ocean**
23 *(14)* TIR NA NOG **Gargoyle Games**
24 *(—)* REDHAWK **Melbourne House**
25 *(24)* OUT OF THE SHADOWS **Mizar**
26 *(25)* EMERALD ISLE **Level 9**
27 *(26)* MINDSHADOW **Activision**
28 *(—)* VALHALLA **Legend**
29 *(19)* THEIR FINEST HOUR **Century**
30 *(22)* ADRIAN MOLE **Level 9/Mozaic**

The requisite forty pounds of freebie games will be bundled into a jiffy bag sealed with a loving AGGIEkiss and sent to **Adam Fletcher** of Cheltenham as the winner of this month's Hotline draw. Four lucky runners up each receive a designer CRASH Hat and T shirt. Auntie Aggie will be getting up early to iron the T Shirts before sending them, with unironed hats, to **Graham Pugh** who hails from Cardiff; **K Grzesik** of Rotherham; **Michael Burns** from Luton and **Paul Gregory** who, living in Portsmouth.



have been compiled, five for each chart, and prizes go whizzing off to the lucky senders of those forms. The first form out of the sack of Hotline votes, like the first one to come out of the Adventure voting box, wins its sender £40 worth of software of his or her choice. And a CRASH T Shirt, of course.

The next four voting slips for each chart, that's eight voters in all, win a T Shirt and Cap. Don't miss out on your chance to win all these goodies for the cost of a 17p stamp and the time it takes to put pen and your opinions to paper. CRASH HOTLINE and CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL are what we call the giant boxes that your votes go into, and they can be reached via PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.

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The summer season is upon us again, and the flocks of tourists visiting Ludlow (not that many of them American this year) are amazed by the wide open space left by the demise of the Town Hall. The council has asked interested bodies to put forward ideas on how the prime site vacated by the Town Hall should be used, and I feel it might be worth putting in a bid for a new Ludlow Gibbet.

There's certainly no shortage of slimesters ready and willing to have a go at cheating it seems, and a package deal with the Ludlow Mafia could make a valuable contribution to the local economy. Right. I'm going to type up my suggestion and get it in the post tonight — meanwhile here's another dose of High Score Gore to be going on with . . .

Hunchback II Completed
World Cup Football Won World Cup
Rocco 3rd Boxer
Wizards Lair Two pieces of lion
Gunfright Rumpo Kid
International Karate Completed, 84,000
Saboteur Completed on level 5
Cyclone 6 crates
Commando Level 6
Exploding Fist 6th Dan
Yie Ar Kung Fu Grand Master
Yabba Dabba Doo Built House
Moon Cresta Far Out
Match Day Final, but lost
Hunchback Level 7
Kung Fu Red belt
Cauldron Collected frog
Danger Mouse Saved World
Chuckie Egg Level 16
Shane Wheeler, Doncaster, South Yorkshire

Commando Area 18, 648,450
Exploding Fist 10th Dan, 23 times 160,250
Green Beret End of 4th zone — 130,250.
Bombjack Round the clock 152,000
Saboteur Completed on all levels
Elite Dangerous
Spy Hunter 450,775
Rambo Completed, 52,100
Lord of the Rings Adventure 1: reached bridge with strider. Adventure 2: reached Lothlorien and now I'm stuck on both
Robin 'Drago' Bliney, Newark, Notts

Rambo Completed
JSW 1 Completed
Manic Miner 19 screens
Wheelie 8 screens
Commando 12 zones
Kosmic Kanga 7 screens
Transformers 4 levels
Technician Ted 3 tasks
Rockman 13 screens
Potty Pigeon 11,220 points
Dynamite Dan Completed
Booty 9 pieces left
Deathchase 2,044 points
Lunar Jetman Completed
GRANT + GUY. Monkseaton, Whitley Bay

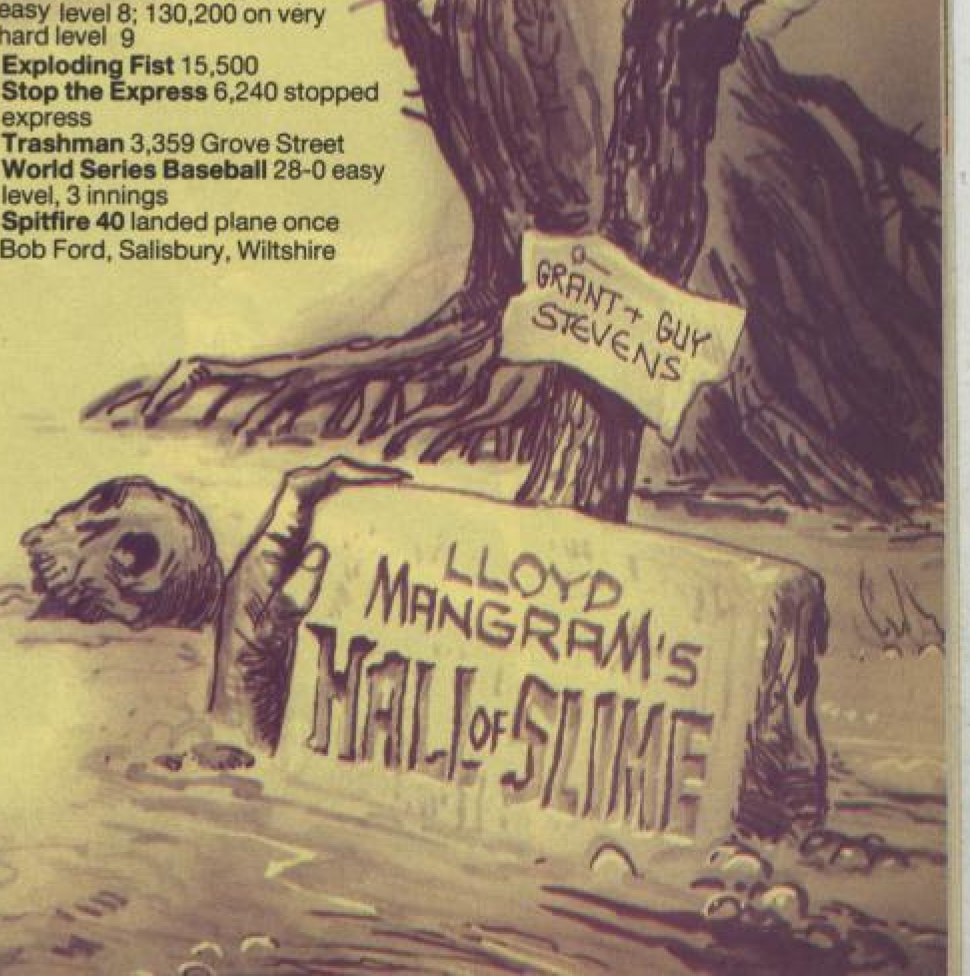
Knightlore 43%
Mikie round the game twice
Alien 8 7 chambers
Underwurlde Completed
Sabre Wulf Completed
Jet Pac Completed twice in a row
Frank Bruno Beat players 1, 7, 3, 4, 5, 6
Bruce Lee completed 7 times
Way of Exploding Fist 10th Dan twice
Starquake All pieces but one
Commando Broke area 3
Ian Sirs, Hartlepool, Cleveland

Commando Area 31, 5,471,400 (with poke)
Rambo 24,000
D.T.'s Decathlon 100m 10.42s; Long Jump 87.04m; Shot Putt 27.00m; High Jump 2.44m; 400m, 33.97s; 110m Hurdles 10.62s; Pole Vault 5.09m; Discus 80.11m; Javelin 135m; 1500m 267s
Hypersports Swimming 26.04s; Skeet Shooting 9400; Vault 9.38; Archery 3840; Long Jump 14.68m; Weightlifting 210 kg. Total: 272,114
Manic Miner Completed 4 times round (I used no pokes)
Jet Set Willy 51 items
Nodes of Yesod 70%
Arc of Yesod 65%
Monty on the Run 7,000, completed
Beach Head Captured all levels
Alien 8 6 chambers
Knightlore 33%
Underwurlde 24%
Sabre Wulf 73,800 at 53%
Hobbit 22%
Tapper Punk Bar
Winter Games Hot Dog 10; Ski Jump 230; Speed Skating 30.03s; Free Skating 6.2; Figure Skating 4.3; Biathlon 1m 10s; Bobsleigh 24.70s
Bruce Lee Killed 9 wizards
Match Day Won final 1-0
Exploding Fist 7th Dan
Automania Car 114 (with poke)
Everyone's a Wally Pay £1,200
Frank Bruno's Boxing Frenchie
Wizards Lair 3 bits of lion
Critical Mass completed on easy
Ping Pong Beat computer on levels 1, 2, 3, and 4. Score 285,560
Steve Davis Snooker Break 35
Quazatron Cities of Quazatron, Beebatron and Commodo saved. Nearly saved Amstrados. Score 32925.
Richard Davy, Silsden, West Yorkshire

Mikie 162,600
Hunchback Completed
Back to Skool Got Frog
Exploding Fist 9th Dan
Horace Goes Skiing 2,655
Cyclone Got 4 of the 5 crates
Atic Atac Completed 97%
Match Day 11-0 on International
Winter Games Ski Jump 229.5; Hot Dog 10; Speed Skating 38.7
Guy Mallison, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

Bombjack 780,340
Green Beret 62,500
Automania 6 cars
Saboteur Completed
Mikie Clock 3 times
Dynamite Dan 5 stick of Dynamite
Commando Area 5
Bruce Lee Completed 8 times
Wizards Lair 2 pieces of golden lion
Ant Attack 6 women
Martin Knight, Coventry

Commando 189,400 Completed Level 9
Rambo 18,400 1 Hostage
Starquake Completed 79%
Saboteur £35,600 completed Level 3
Bruce Lee 234,850 completed 4 times
Yie Ar Kung Fu 158,500 Level 18
Fighting Warrior 117,380
Bombjack 451,730
Starstrike II 982,100
3D Starstrike 1,706,900 on easy level 8; 130,200 on very hard level 9
Exploding Fist 15,500
Stop the Express 6,240 stopped express
Trashman 3,359 Grove Street
World Series Baseball 28-0 easy level, 3 innings
Spitfire 40 landed plane once
Bob Ford, Salisbury, Wiltshire





GIANT

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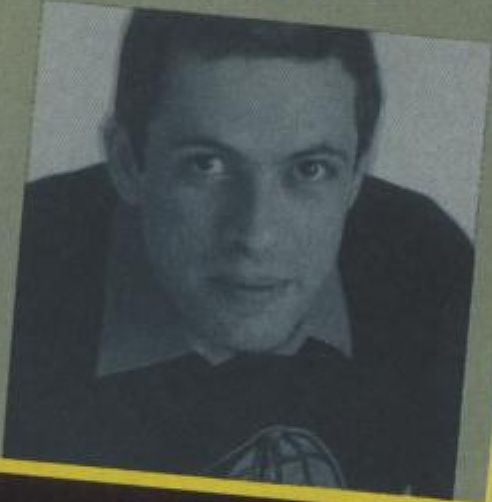
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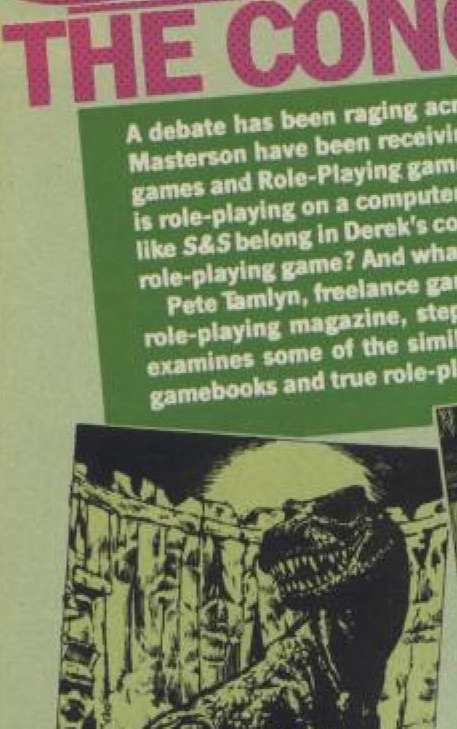
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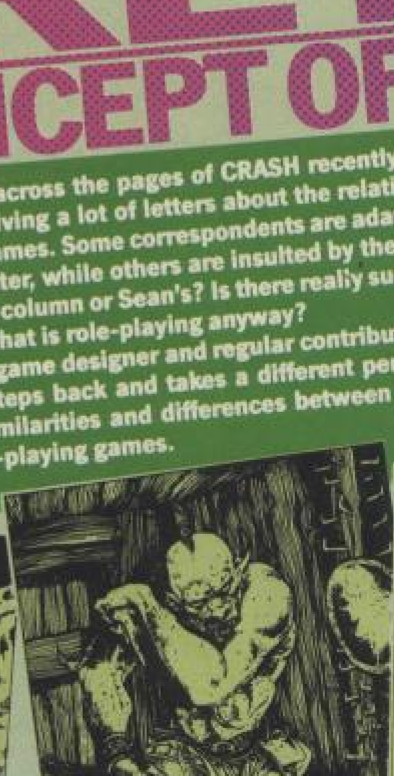
STRETCHING THE CONCEPT OF ADVENTURE GAMES

COMPUTER GAMES: FROM ADVENTURES THROUGH FIGHTING FANTASY TO ROLE PLAYING (Not forgetting MERPS!)

A debate has been raging across the pages of CRASH recently. Derek Brewster and Sean Masterson have been receiving a lot of letters about the relationships between computer games and Role-Playing games. Some correspondents are adamant that *Swords & Sorcery* is role-playing on a computer, while others are insulted by the comparison. Should games like *S&S* belong in Derek's column or Sean's? Is there really such a thing as a computerised role-playing game? And what is role-playing anyway?

Pete Tamlyn, freelance game designer and regular contributor to WHITE DWARF, the leading role-playing magazine, steps back and takes a different perspective. . . . This month he examines some of the similarities and differences between computer games, adventure gamebooks and true role-playing games.











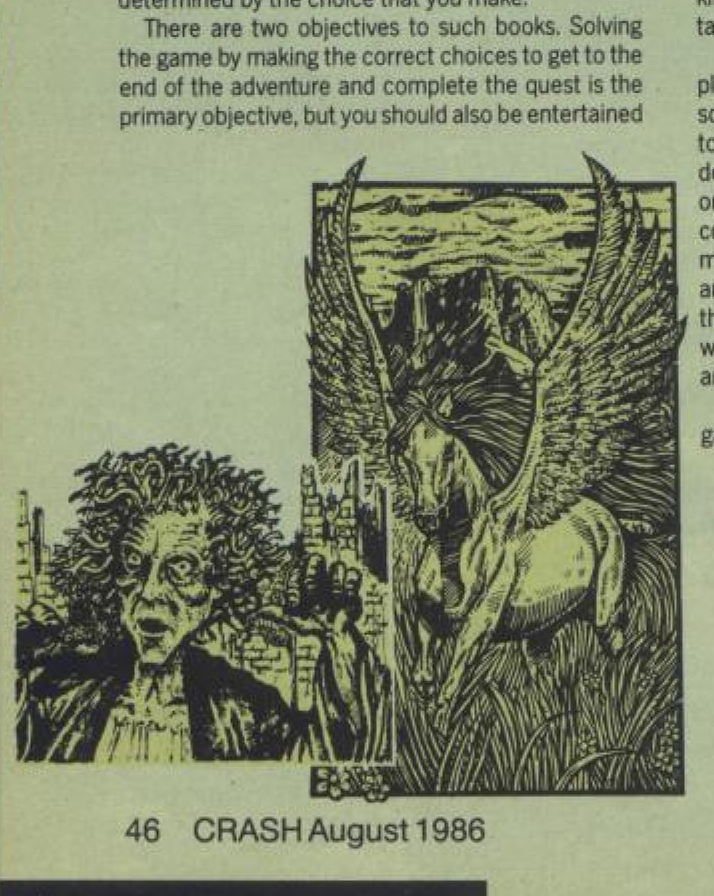


While role-playing games have probably only been enjoyed by a small proportion of CRASH readers, most of you should have seen the *Fighting Fantasy* adventure gamebooks created by **Steve Jackson** and **Ian Livingstone** as well as other works of interactive fiction produced by *FF* imitators. Just in case you've been lost in the Amazon jungle for the past few years, the general idea is as follows: you, the reader/player, read through a succession of numbered paragraphs. At the end of each one you are presented with a choice of options — normally three. The number of the paragraph that you read next is determined by the choice that you make.

There are two objectives to such books. Solving the game by making the correct choices to get to the end of the adventure and complete the quest is the primary objective, but you should also be entertained by the story that unfolds as you read through the book. The storytelling, however, tends to fall by the wayside — most of these books are written by game designers rather than by novelists and, I'm sorry to say, it shows. The game aspect is more interesting, but it suffers from its simplicity.

Looking at a gamebook in pure game terms, as a contest between you and the writer, the book is simply a succession of game turns in which you have to choose one of three options. This is not a very complex game: even in noughts and crosses you get an average of 4½ choices per turn. The sad fact is that if a gamebook writer plays fair and gives you the chance to make an intelligent decision each time, then the game will be much too easy to solve. Instead they rely on dirty tricks: witholding information from you, giving seemingly sensible choices that lead you into inescapable danger, and killing you off as often as possible. That way the game takes longer, and the player gets more value out of it.

It is generally accepted that gamebooks and role-playing are not the same thing, although they do have some features in common. A gamebook is very similar to a computer adventure — instead of location descriptions, which may involve graphics displayed on the computer screen, you have paragraphs. In a computerised adventure, however, you have a lot more options — usually at least six per location — and, more importantly, you don't always know what they are. Instead of a list of choices you have a list of words which you can use, only some of which are of any use.



Of course, even though the format of the computer game makes life much more difficult for the player, some game designers still don't play fair. A good puzzle takes a lot of thought to solve, but is blindingly obvious once you've cracked it. Many adventure games still rely on problems which require seemingly ridiculous solutions or a very obscure choice of words in order to keep the player guessing. Computerised adventures are getting steadily better, and in general are much more interesting than gamebooks.



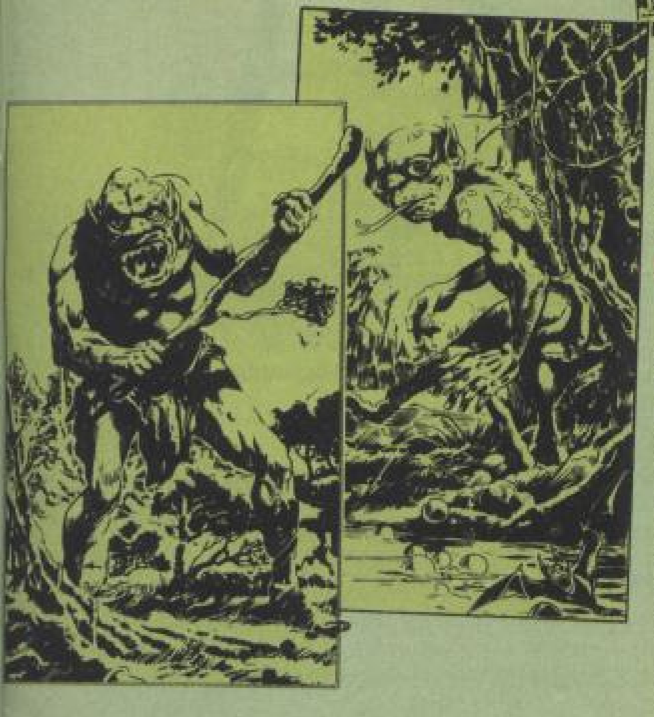
On the story-telling front things can be much worse on the computer screen. At least most gamebook writers accept that they are supposed to be telling a story, but many adventures are written by programmers, and programmers tend to be obsessed with logic puzzles. It doesn't enter their minds to try to entertain as well. It is a great shame that INFOCOM have coined the term "interactive fiction" because it is a very good description of what adventure games could be like, but a very poor description of what they actually produce! *Valkyrie 17* is perhaps unique amongst adventures in that it was scripted by a top class professional writer — the popularity of *Valkyrie* shows that the approach works. Games based on books (*Fourth Protocol* for instance) also tend to be better than those for which the programmer writes the plot as well as the code that makes things happen.

Talking of games based on books, we do have a direct comparison between adventures and gamebooks. ADVENTURESOFT are doing a series of direct conversions of *Fighting Fantasy* books into computer adventures. The first of these, *Seas of Blood*, followed the book so closely that it suffered from it: some of the rather unfair tricks that Jackson

and Livingstone pulled in their book were simply not necessary in the more complex computerised adventure format. Still, it does go to show that gamebooks and adventures are very similar animals indeed. **ADVENTURESOFT**'s output belongs very firmly in Derek's column.

Now, what about role-playing? Gamebooks and role-playing are not the same thing. And if gamebooks





and computer adventures are very similar, then adventures can't be role-playing either. So what is this mystical ingredient found in role-playing games that gets Derek's Signpost correspondents so upset?

The most obvious thing to say about role-playing is that it involves playing a role. You, as the player, are supposed to identify with the character whose part you take in the game. Of course this happens in gamebooks and computer adventures as well, but these games are often so obviously artificial that it is difficult to maintain such an attitude when playing them. You are far too busy puzzling over the logic puzzles to identify with your character.

Role-playing, then, is often a matter of degree rather than an obvious characteristic of a game. In order to determine whether the role-playing element of a game works, role-players often use a term invented by Tolkein, "suspension of disbelief": if the player — despite the fact that he is playing a game — can believe both in the fantasy world into which he has been plunged and in his place in that world, then he is role-playing. Accordingly, a lot of the features of role-playing games are designed to promote this "suspension of disbelief".

One way of creating this air of reality is to set the game in a well defined world rather than have isolated adventures which have no meaning in any wider context. Setting games in the real world is an easy means of achieving this, but role-playing games tend to be set in fantasy worlds. Thus we have *Middle Earth Role-Playing* (*MERP*, based on Tolkein's books), *Star Trek*, *Judge Dredd*, *Marvel Super Heroes*, *Dr Who*, and any number of other games set in worlds that the players will know well. In addition, role-playing game publishers put a lot of effort into producing 'background material' for their games.



The most obvious feature of a role-playing game, as opposed to a gamebook or computer adventure, is that you can in theory do anything you want. Rather than having a restricted number of options as in a gamebook, the player can give any order and expect a reasonable result. Of course, you can issue any order in an adventure, but the chances are that if you type in "scratch nose" the program will reply with "I don't understand" or "You can't do that". More importantly, the computer often comes back with the same idiot response to many of the things you thought were reasonable solutions to the current problem.

Role-playing games are run by human referees (called Games Masters, or GM's for short) rather than computers; humans (Commodore owners excepted) are rather more intelligent than Spectrums. But role-playing games also approach things somewhat differently. As anyone who has used *The Quill* or a similar product will know, adventure games work on a very simple system governed by a table of 'events'. Events tend to have the form, "if the player enters word X when in location Y then Z happens". Role-playing rules are much more flexible. They tend to assign numerical values to various aspects of the world in which the game takes place, and use these to determine the result of actions. In a computer adventure, the command "break down door" will either work or not, depending on whether there is an event allowing it: in role-playing the GM will compare the strength of the player to the resistance provided by the door to determine the result.

This sort of rule can be, and is being incorporated into adventure games (indeed, even *Fighting Fantasy* books manage to accommodate the example given above). The problem is that each rule needs different code to interpret it, where as in the event-based system you only need to check that the event that occurs is in the table provided. Doubtless, as artificial intelligence programming techniques improve, so will the games. (It is interesting to note, incidentally, that the original computer adventure, *Adventure*, was written as a PhD thesis on artificial intelligence. We've come a long way since then!)

Something else that the human referee has on his side is his command of language. His vocabulary is much greater that that of any computer, and a GM can understand the same instruction put in many different ways. The parsers — chunks of code that interpret player commands — of computer games are improving, but the simplest way to handle command input is to have a list of legal commands from which the player can make a selection. That may seem artificial, but knowing you can only do a limited range of things is often much less irritating than doing what you think is sensible and getting an idiotic reply.

Storyline is a very important factor in role-playing. A lot of the identification that you get with your character and the game world comes as a result of the skill with which the GM presents the material to you. Computer games don't have that personal touch, but could make up for it by having a good novelist providing the script. The main problem is lack of space for the large number of words that writers require to generate atmosphere.

Several of the people who have written to CRASH about role-playing have stressed the interactive, social element of such games. As well as the GM you have maybe four or five fellow players to talk to. This tends to be very good for atmosphere, especially if you all sit round saying things like "what shall we do next" rather than "what do you think the GM expects us to do now". A multi-player game where everyone can participate at once (rather than one at a time as in *Doomdark's Revenge*) might be fairly difficult on a Spectrum, but two player games should be quite simple, especially if the game is joystick controlled. The arcade game, *Gauntlet*, caters for up to four players and works very well — I have to admit a personal interest here: having designed a Spectrum implementation of the arcade original, I'm waiting to see if it comes to fruition.

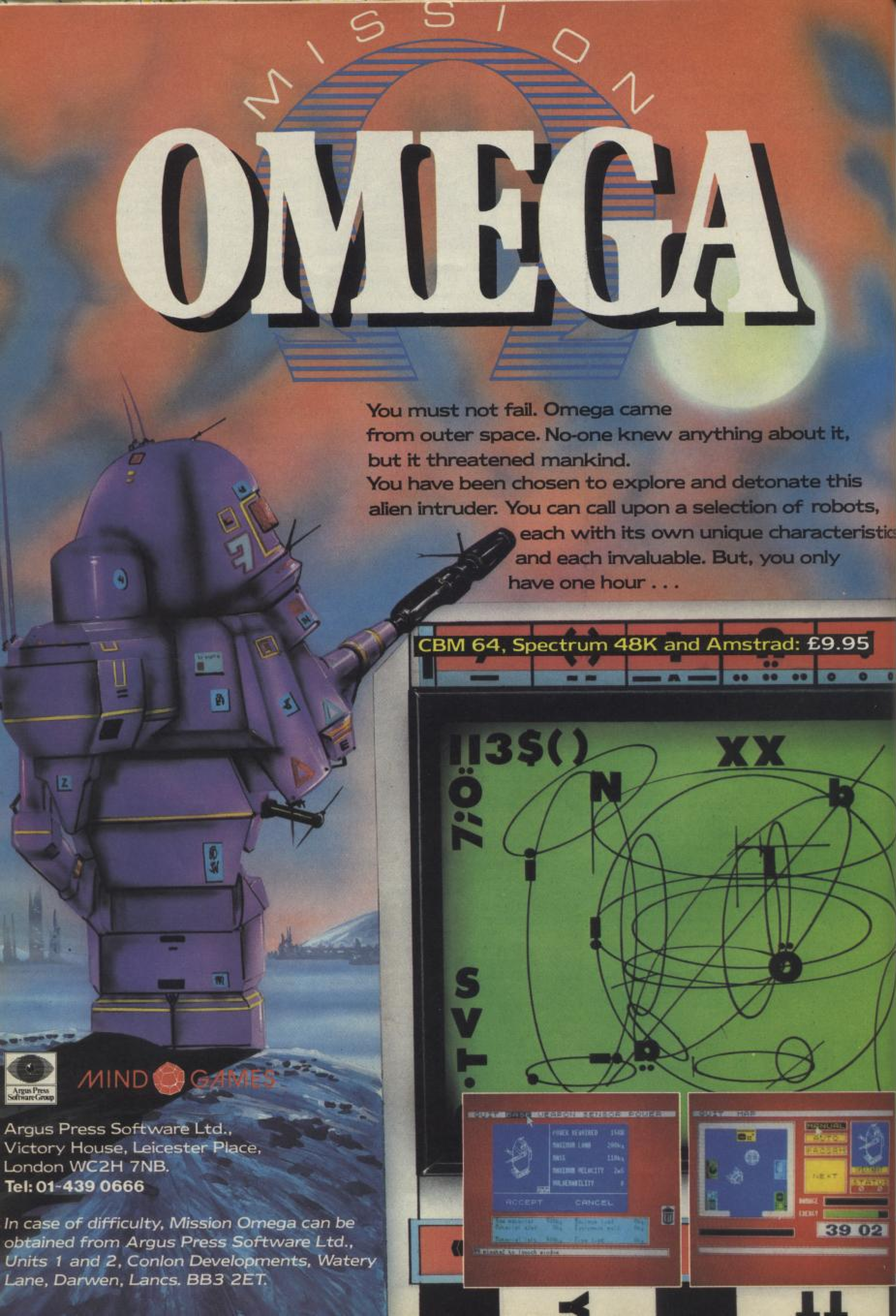
One thing you can't do on a computer is have the non-player characters talk back sensibly. In role-playing the GM can act the part of everyone you meet, but we are a long way from getting programs that can hold sensible conversations with the human player(s).

Another point I would like to consider is the death rate. In gamebooks and computer adventures, getting killed is a very common result of making a mistake. It has the advantage of forcing the player to start again from the beginning, which is a very good way of increasing the time it takes to play through the game. A lot of computer adventures allow you to save positions and go back to them if you die, but you are still expected to get killed regularly. In role-playing this tends not to happen. Instead you get a little way into the game, find it getting tough, and retreat. Having got home safely you are deemed to have learned from your experiences and your character may get more powerful as a result. The number of 'experience points' gained during a foray into the adventure world generally governs the alteration to your status. When you go back to fight another day, things are likely to be more easy.

Allowing the player to build up experience contributes a better atmosphere to the game. The player should feel for his character, ideally, should feel he IS the character. If he keeps getting killed off the character is more likely to be viewed as expendable rather than as an extension of the player. Role-playing tends to be very open-ended on account of the the effects of experience points — players tend to have lots of little adventures rather than one big one. And to begin with, you are often not powerful enough to do anything spectacular. To run such open-ended games well, a vast arena in which to play is needed: GM's sometimes map out entire continents, worlds or even universes. You can't run anything like that on a computer without quite a lot of memory, and disc drives . . .



Next month, I'll take a look at the way role-playing games have been transferred to computer — and not just the Spectrum. On the Spectrum front, Mike Singleton's new game Dark Sceptre *should be nearly finished, and* Mandragore *from a French software house is due along any day now. There's* Swords & Sorcery, *of course, plus a few other favourites. . . .*


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ACCEPT
CANCEL
MANUAL
NEXT
STATUS
39 02

FRONTLINE





with Sean Masterson

OF SUN, FUN AND PEBBLES IN THE SKY

Huh! Well into the summer season and all I've managed to do is sunburn both shoulders and one half of my face. Typical. I go through the same pointless charade every summer (well, every summer the sun shines) but never has it been worthwhile. Maybe I ought to go back to wearing clothes pegs. Graeme only thinks it's stupid because he can't figure out *why* I wear them. Still, the hot days have forced me to many a pub to avoid dehydration where many pints of cider have been consumed in thirst quenching ecstacy.

Apart from quaffing the ale and becoming a part time culture vulture during the Ludlow Festival, I've had more time to delve into arcane tomes on role playing and have whetted my appetite for the autumn to come. If and when GAMES WORKSHOP get their Convention schedule sorted out properly, I will go along and join in the festivities. If you have never visited such conventions, I can only suggest you keep a look out for the upcoming events and drag yourself along. Assuming there's a bar, I'll let you buy me a pint. If there aren't any bars, I'll take you to a pub and then you can buy me a pint. In return I'll listen to your abuse. An offer you can't refuse.

Meanwhile . . . GAME DESIGNERS' WORKSHOP, the American company responsible for *Traveller* has altered its quarterly *Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society* to standard magazine format, widened the subject matter and renamed it *Challenge*, now available at all good games shops at a ridiculously inflated price. However, they've started a regular page devoted to program listings for referee's aids. They are actually written with Apple users in mind but would not need much alteration to run on a Spectrum. It is worth taking a look at if you use your trusty black box for such things.

One other thing. As this issue goes on sale, hope for clear nights. There's a meteor shower known as the Perseids which should peak around this time. Well, it's something to watch while you lie on your back in the garden cooling the suntan in the evening breezes.

Good deeds over. Let's get on with the reviews . . .

REBEL STAR

Producer: Firebird
Retail Price: £1.99
Author: J Gollop

After recently looking at the old RED SHIFT game, *Rebelstar Raiders* and getting a lot of response, I was pleased to receive this release from Firebird. Called *Rebelstar*, it is actually written by the author of that early classic but has been much improved. For the price, this has to be the best strategy game I've reviewed in ten months of writing FRONTLINE.

One and Two player versions of the game are provided, each loaded as a separate game from a different side of the cassette. There is only one scenario, but this is larger than any of those in its predecessor. It involves a group of raiders trying to break into an enemy complex and disable the main computer. Player(s) controls individual characters or robots which are each allocated a certain number of action points. The members of a player's team are ordered individually with different actions costing varying numbers of points. Each team member may carry out as many actions as required in a single move, as long as the point allowance for that character is not exceeded for that move.



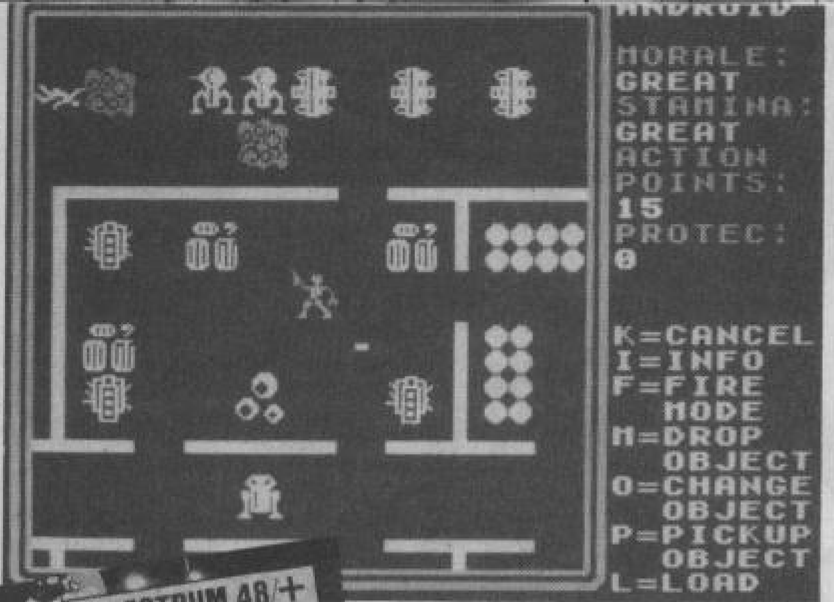
Inside the moonbase, two androids on the lower part of the screen move to attack the raiders. The hollow square on the left of the viewscreen is the cursor — it's the start of a turn, and no selections have been made

Each character carries a weapon of some description and a quota of ammunition and may also carry several other items found on the route to the central computer. Only one item may be used at any time and it costs Action Points to change from one item to another.

The screen scrolls in four directions following the trail of the cursor used to order team members. To the right of the main action area, an information display lists the options available and any information about the figure currently highlighted by the cursor.

A CRASH Smash

Play consists of turns during which a player moves and orders all forces under his or her control. Movement for characters is eight directional and orders consist of M (drop object), P (pick up object), O (change object in use), L (load object) and F (enter fire mode). Movement is achieved by selecting a unit and moving it under the cursor. When fire mode is entered, some map detail disappears, combatants become coloured spheres and the cursor changes into a sight. This sight is positioned in the desired target area and when confirmed, an energy beam is displayed along with a message detailing the accuracy of the pulse. There are three different kinds of shot: an aimed shot costs the most points but is most likely to succeed; a snap shot is less accurate





but costs fewer points to perform; finally, a player may select opportunity fire to cover a particular area. Opportunity Fire only executes a shot when an enemy crosses the line of fire during his turn, in which case a snapshot is fired at him.

Shots may damage, wound or kill, scoring a random number of points determined by the power of the weapon. Generally, the more powerful the weapon a character possesses, the less ammunition is available. If a character is wounded in combat, a message to this effect appears next time that character is selected. Wounding reduces the constitution of a character — second wound kills. Killed characters are removed from play, but droids that have been knocked out leave wreckage which causes a blockage.

As the complex is entered and explored, various objects may become available to the players. Keys can be used to lock or unlock security doors (the key to the armoury is particularly useful). Medi-probes can be used to heal wounded characters, and Droid-probes repair droids. Using an object is achieved by bumping into the required target.

In the one player game, you may only take the part of the raiders but this apparent limitation is offset by the fact that the computer opponent is a highly competent adversary. It deploys the defending droids cleverly and uses them ruthlessly in its attempt to thwart your mission. However, as there are eight difficulty settings, you can temper this efficiency somewhat.

The game is superbly error trapped and many of the warning messages relate to specific actions to avoid ambiguity. The map is clean and well drawn but packed with detail and every item is properly labelled. Character graphics are quite good with different weapons altering the look of the troopers (all of whom are named). Even the sound effects are reasonable. Weapon skills, stamina and morale are taken into account on an individual level and atmosphere and variety included in each event. Each character also has an assigned percentage chance of hitting a target listed.

I would have expected a game of such quality to appear at a much higher price, and take my hat off to FIREBIRD for introducing this much improved version of an old favourite back onto the market at a reasonable price. I can find no fault with it.

PRESENTATION 88%

The presentation on screen is spotless. If FIREBIRD had taken more care with the instruction inlay, it could have been better

RULES 90%

Simple to pick up, but deviously devised

PLAYABILITY 92%

You can almost play as soon as you load. The game runs at a fast pace from start to finish

GRAPHICS 90%

Colourful, clear, detailed . . . what more can you ask?

AUTHENTICITY 91%

The Action Point system works excellently. It is however, very similar to that used by GDW in their game *Snapshot*. Come to think of it, there are a lot of similarities . . .

OPPONENT 91%

You will hate it once on the higher skill levels

VALUE FOR MONEY 95%

Unbeatable

OVERALL 93%

No longer need you lament for RED SHIFT. This classic game is up for grabs now. I can only suggest you scamper off and get a copy

SWORD AND SHIELD

Producer: Black Knight Computers Ltd
Retail Price: £5.95

Sword and Shield is a mediaeval strategy game concocted by the same team that brought you *Seventh Cavalry*. A king of somewhere lost in the mists of time has allocated control of one of his territories to you. Your orders are to make 1000 groats (local currency) from development of the crop farms. However, there are more than natural disasters to contend with. Invading knights and their infantry can cause trouble and rebellious farmers, known as the masked men, are set on making your life impossible.

A number of parameters end the game should they be exceeded. If you ever have less than thirty crops, or your own contingent of knights becomes .exhausted or you take over 200 years to reach the objective, the game ends in defeat. The only way to win is to amass the groats and avoid any of the above.

The game turns are one year long, and the player can order forces to keep the enemy at bay, send knights out to look for treasure in neighbouring castles and set the tax rate. The player can select a short or full length game and the facility to load and save unfinished ventures has been thoughtfully included.

The game isn't a purely historical saga however. BLACK KNIGHT have gone down the fantasy road by populating the wilds with up to four rather unfriendly dragons. These dragons have an inverted hibernation habit in that they only appear in the winter (though they remain in play unless dealt with). They are also the strongest of the player's possible adversaries.

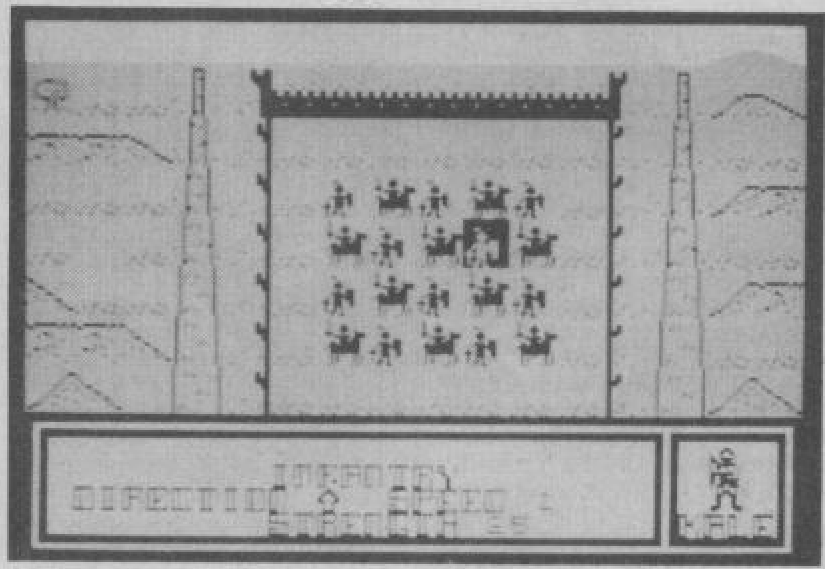
Knights are a major asset — they are strong and fast, adaptable, and can conscript peasants to create infantry. At the end of the year, when treasure chests appear (for some strange reason), only the knights can venture to get them. Movement and orders for knights and others are carried out with a cursor (known as your 'shadow') and eight directional scrolling of the landscape can also be achieved with this.

At the end of the year three summary screens appear. The first is the obligatory SAVE option. The second tells you the current tax rate, the quantity of crops grown during the year, how much income has been made and the balance in your treasury. The final screen displays the number of knights, farms and and infantry you have with another reminder of your balance. At convenient points in this sequence are the options to change the tax rate (arbitrarily set at 20% at the start of the game) and purchase new knights, infantry and farms. Play then continues to the next year.

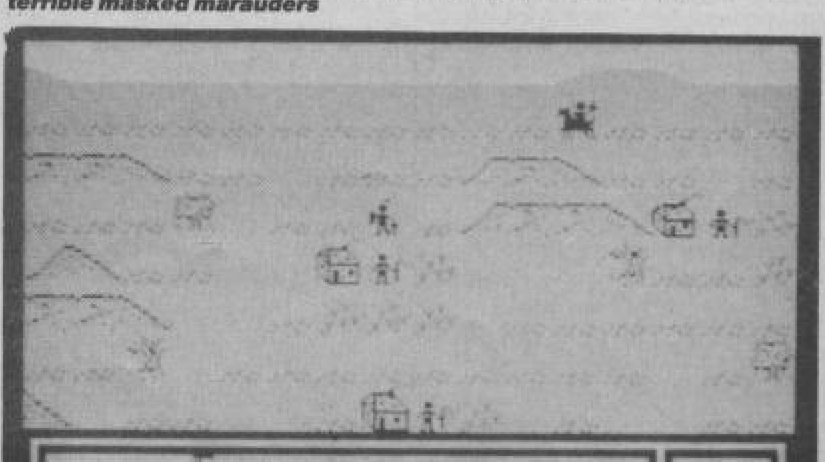
Play is simple and straightforward. There's no obvious flaw *in* the game it's just that there isn't enough game there. The trouble with products like this is that they are immensely difficult to get anywhere with until the correct balance is found. After that, all the challenge disappears. Enter yawn mode.

If there was something of interest to look at on the screen, it might have been more bearable. As it stands, the visual aspects of the game are bland and unimaginative, with smooth scrolling being the only saving grace. The price adds insult to injury. It costs at least two pounds more than it's worth. The company probably don't have the resources to bring the game out more cheaply, but they should have gone for an improved product to justify their pricing. They stand to gain little from overpriced mediocrity.

If you're really stuck for a new



A knight moves into the fray to protect frontier farms from the terrible masked marauders



strategy game, then this one will provide a challenge for a while. But play becomes as predictable and hackneyed as the plot itself before long. The game is a throwback to the days when strategists couldn't afford to be choosy. Nowadays we can, of course, and I suggest you choose to leave this one alone.

PRESENTATION 39%

Passable title screen

RULES 40%

Not bad — what there is of them

PLAYABILITY 45%

Easy to play if you can take the monotony

GRAPHICS 33%

Good scrolling but little else to catch the eye

AUTHENTICITY 10%

I don't think this game is true to anything — itself included

OPPONENT 37%

Difficult to beat at first

VALUE FOR MONEY 36%

Two years ago this might just have been reasonable, but not nowadays

OVERALL 35%

Very mediocre



FRONTLINE FORUM

Again, space is short (but so am I) so let's dive straight into this month's offerings . . .

Dear Sean,
I've been playing board and miniature wargames for over ten years but have only recently got into computing and I'm glad to find a magazine that covers wargaming. The only problem with computer wargames seems to be the lack of high quality software. As you said, "80% of anything is rubbish" (*Actually, I think the percentage is higher*—**SM**) and some of the past games have certainly been bad.

It strikes me that the ideal wargame would be more of a skirmish type game with the computer handling the display and movement/number-crunching aspects: I've been working on a Samurai period game using skirmish rules and I'll send you a copy if it works out Okay.

John Weller, Kingston, Surrey

Please do send me anything you concoct. That goes for anyone else writing their own material as well. I'll review everything sent in. Here's £20 worth of software to give you some incentive — Okay John?

SM

Dear Sean,
I frequently read FRONTLINE but must confess to not having a single strategy game in my collection. What ruins most of these games (or puts me off) is the slow play and number of keys used. Therefore, why don't companies bring out icon driven wargames? Such games would be more playable, and the inclusion of arcade sequences would widen the appeal to other gamers.

Steven Cook, Milton, Glasgow

As you may suspect, you're wrong. Their Finest Hour was an icon driven strategy game and there have and will be others. I do agree though, that icon driven software increases the appeal of such games. PSS often include arcade sections in their wargames, but whether this improves them is a matter for debate. I think that in such cases you end up with two bad games rather than one good one — but that's only my opinion . . .

SM

Dear Sean,
The May issue was the best yet — somebody finally reviewed *Rebelstar Raiders*! I bought this game 12-18 months ago, and for my money it has still not been beaten. Now, to test how good you are at your job — WHERE CAN I GET HOLD OF THE EXPANSION MODULE?

I thought I would compliment you on the way you have picked up Angus Ryall's standard (or should that be rifle). After a relatively shaky start, the column seems to be expanding nicely and the addition of a FRONTLINE FORUM is a great idea. Who knows, maybe this measly literary effort will win £20 worth of software.

Ian Mason, Newbury, Berks

First things first, you can't. Nobody has bothered with any RED SHIFT material since the company went bust. Finding stocks of old games or expansions now would probably be impossible. Thanks for the creeping bit, but you'll have to do better than that to get twenty quid's worth of games out of me.

SM

Dear Sean,
I beg to differ about your views on *Rebelstar Raiders* being one of the best from RED SHIFT. Have you never seen *Apocalypse*? I'm not knocking *RR* but I feel it comes nowhere near *Apocalypse* in terms of quality. Though you mentioned that RED SHIFT no longer exists, I would be interested to anybody who may have taken over their business, as I would like to send off for expansion maps for *Apocalypse* and maybe some new scenarios for *RR*.

Jon Moore, Newport, Gwent

Actually, I do prefer Apocalypse *but couldn't get hold of a copy in time for those reviews. As to your queries, I'm afraid my answer to the letter above applies here also.*

SM

Dear Sean,
Do you honestly think that war/strategy games are worthy of their own regular column in CRASH? I mean, let's face facts, strategy games have hardly made any astounding breakthroughs on the Spectrum or any other micro.

Compare games such as *Knightlore*, *Starquake* or any other CRASH SMASH with any wargame and I'm sure you'll find the wargame far inferior in all respects. What I'm trying to prove here is that FRONTLINE along with CRASH COURSE should be abolished, making room for more interesting features. I'm sure that the Crashtionnaire results will prove mine is the popular opinion.

If you say, 'But CRASH should cater for minorities,' my reply would be that there are Minorities and minorities. I would call adventures or Tech Niche 'Minorities' which can be proved by comparing sales of such products. This should prove just how insignificant strategy games really are. Can you imagine the size of CRASH if it catered for all minorities?

Well, that sums up what I have to say except I look forward to the day when you and Rosetta have to draw your dole.

Peter Shields, Middleton, Manchester

You're right that this column satisfies only a small minority. That minority is indeed smaller than that of adventure gamers. However, you are the only person who has complained about the column. By your own logic therefore, you must be in an even smaller minority. I suggest that you follow your train of thought to its logical conclusion — and sack yourself!

SM

Dear Sean,
Why restrict yourself to wargames? In my opinion, strategy games involve more than than bashing up each other's armies. Maybe you should expand your column to include all kinds of strategy games. Games you could have covered include *Shadowfire*, *Lords of Midnight* (which has nothing to do with adventures) and *Deus Ex Machina* to name but a few. I like strategy whether its in the form of a wargame or not.

Henk Van Versendaal, Tiel, The Netherlands

I don't consciously restrict coverage to games with military overtones — it's just that more such games arrive than anything else. In the future, I will try and get hold of more of these borderline games before they disappear off to Derek's abode.

SM

Dear Sean,
It was disappointing not to see a FRONTLINE FORUM in CRASH 30 as it is establishing itself as an excellent strategists' views column.

Recently I visited a branch of GAMES WORKSHOP and purchased a very interesting fantasy/strategy game called *Chaos*. The game is very good indeed — **Derek Brewster** reviewed it in issue sixteen and gave it 8/10. But the most important thing was the price, £2.95, a fiver cheaper than the original asking price. It's a game of magical combat between 2-8 wizards in an enclosed arena. Consequently the game provides a good excuse for a party, yes?

G Havenhand, Aston Sheffield

In fact there are several old GW titles up for grabs at ridiculously cheap prices at the moment as they are off-loading remaindered stock, now they have pulled out of the software market. My past may make me biased, but I'm sorry that they ever stopped producing games as they were beginning to turn out memorable products. C'est la vie.
SM

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Ten Quicksilva Games Packs Up For Grabs!

The Competition Minion has gone off in a sulk because I just put washing up liquid in his tea (some people have no sense of humour.) He's disappeared from CRASH Towers — I've had a good look in his favourite haunt, the broom cupboard, but to no avail. He'll probably be in a huff for days now. You know how touchy he is.

Anyway, this is all rather irritating because I'd just finished writing the PLAYING TIPS and was looking forward to a quick five minute break and a sandwich but now uncle Graeme tells me that because the Competition Minion has gone AWOL, I must kick Lloyd of his Hermes and write this competition, which is sponsored by QUICKSILVA in aid of their latest release, *Tantalus*. Sigh. Tomorrow that lazy sack of bones who passes for a Competition Minion is going to get more than detergent in his drink. Oh well, here goes . . .

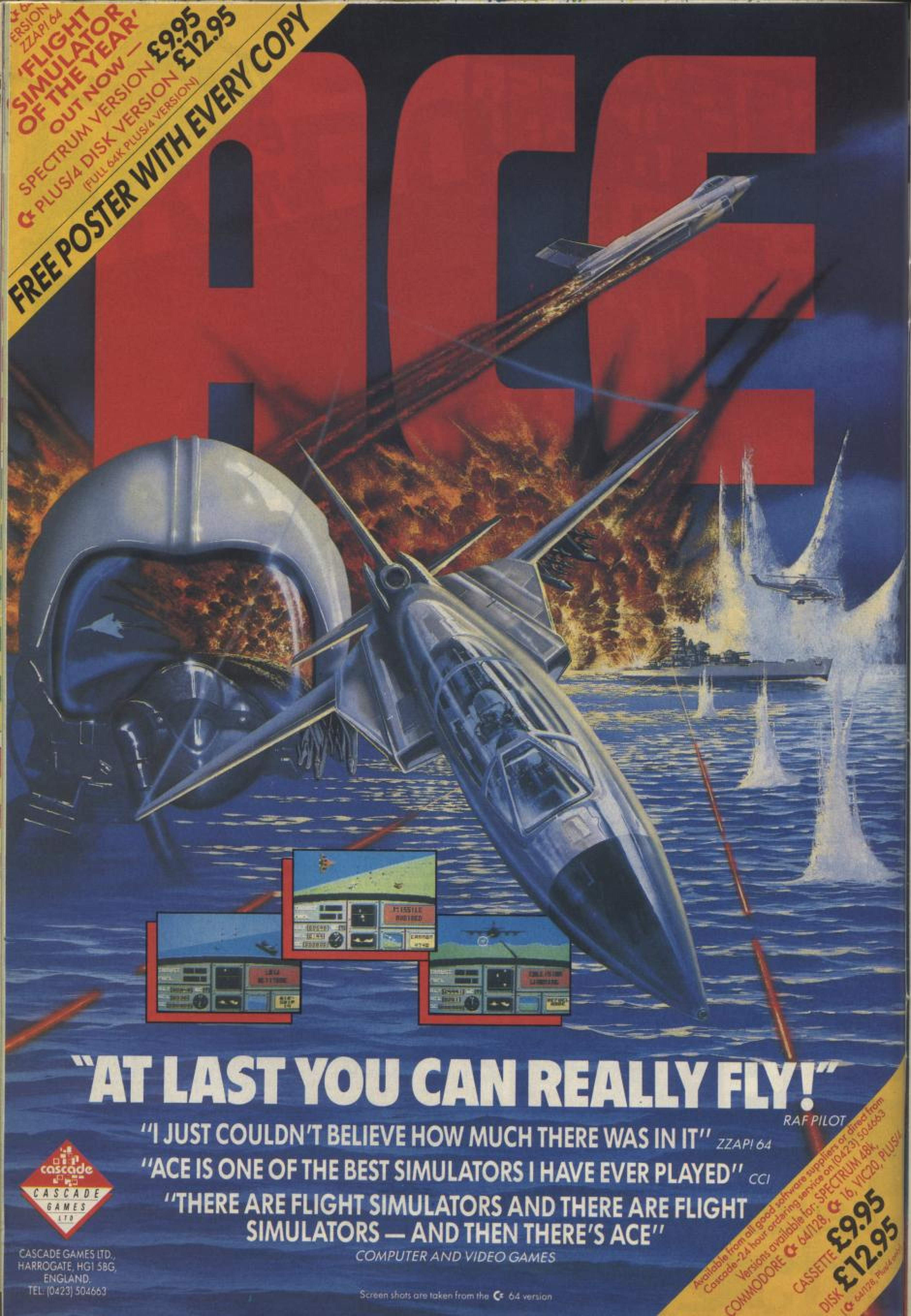
The mammoth *Tantalus* map has run its course in PLAYING TIPS and is no longer behaving like a surrogate carpet in the CRASH office. The giant plan of the game is now winging its way back to QUICKSILVA to adorn their office walls, no doubt. Although the map was complete — and in one giant piece — our cunning Art Department painted out the 32 lock units while they cut it up to be printed. This was not a pointless exercise . . . all part of a plan, you see.

"Could CRASH readers find the lock units which have been left out of the map and draw them in themselves?" the people at QUICKSILVA wondered. Not without an incentive, of course — they are not asking you to do this for gratis, gentle reader. Oh dear me no. First prize is a Spectrum 128 and a pack of QUICKSILVA games, and ten runners up are booked to win a pack of QS games.

All we want you to do is to assemble the map, make a photocopy of it if you like, or you can draw it if you have lots of free time — remember, it's a BIG map — and mark in as many lock units as you can after playing the game. Place this in an envelope and scribble the number of lock units you've found on the back.

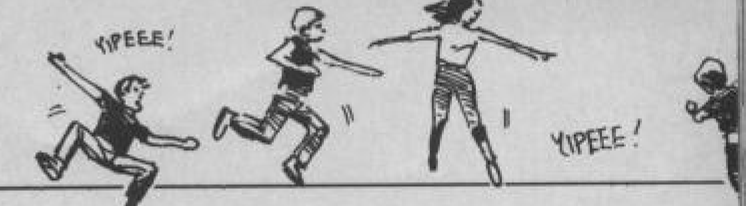
The person with the most lock units correctly marked wins the computer — or we'll have a little 'first out of the hat' session if more than one fully correct entry is received. Next ten completest entries in order collect the games packs.

Whizz your entries in to TANTALUS COMP, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB to arrive by the August 28th and you may receive a Spectrum 128 through the post. And that can't be bad.



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WINNERS & PRIZES



GREENCHOMP COMP

These winners of the Greenchomp Comp certainly knew how to tempt a sailor's palate. They rustled up some scrummy scoff in response to MACMILLAN's offer of Alarm clocks, games and T-shirts and other Popeye Paraphenalia.

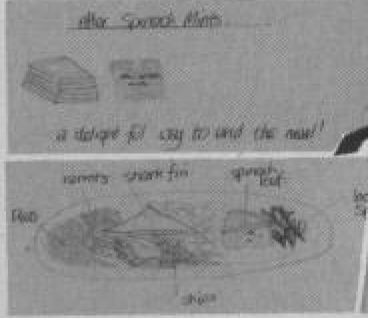
First place goes to **James Ratcliffe** of Empingham Road, PE9 2RJ and **Matthew Hobbs** of Grange Road, GU15 2DH. They both win alarm clocks, T shirts and a copy of *Popeye* the game.

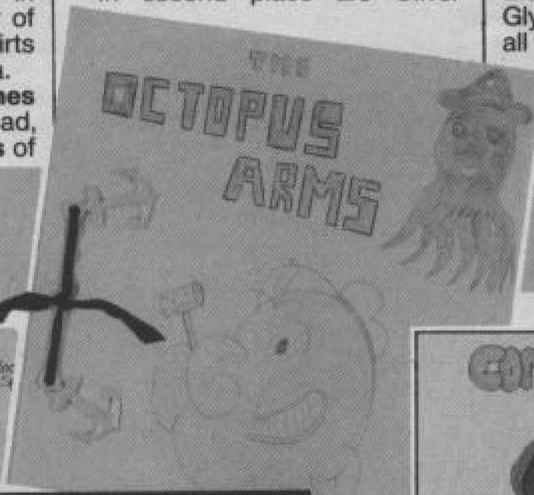
In second place are Oliver Roberts, Firgrove Hill, GU9 8LN; David John Jackson, Landsmoor Drive, PR4 5PE; John Blakeley, Wakefield Road, LS27 OHT; Steven Pagett, St Vincent Avenue, Blackpool and Geraint Letherby, Glyn Gwyn Street, CF45 3AF who all win Popeye wall clocks, T shirts and copies of *Popeye*.

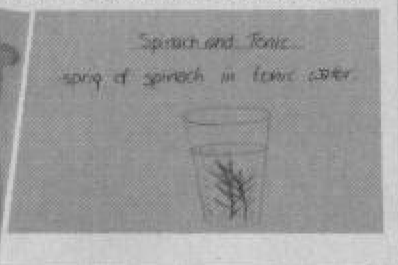
In third place we have Anderson D Sawney, Gayford Road, W12 9BW; David Fort, Kenilworth Close, BB12 8SG and Darren Porter, Bridgewater Road, NN13 6BY who will receive Popeye T shirts and copies of the game.

Forty Runners Up get a copy of *Popeye* for their labours:

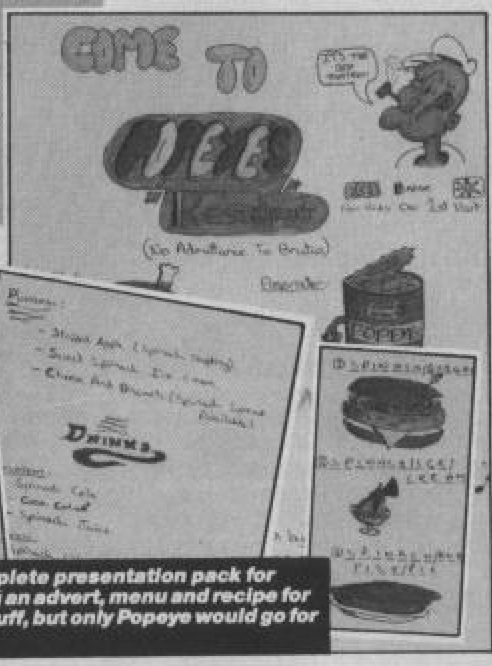
David Bone, Melrose Avenue, NE31 2JF; Leo Derici, Illogan, Cornwall; David Griffin, Fairfield Road, B61 9JW; Spencer Wakelam, Mill Hill Road, L61 4XF; Paul Chan, Conway Road, LL29 7LR; Nicholas Figgins, Palmarsh Crescent, CT21 6NX; David Gorton, Revidge Road, BB1 8DJ; John Budding, Worcester Road, WR9 8AU; Lee Reverley, The Hiron, CV3 6HT; Michael Walker, Kinloch Road, TS6 OES; Chef R Laird, Howey Lees Drive, TD1 3SD; Jonathan Ridehalgh, The Hawthorns, LE6 OSS; Matthew Hackett, Walton Gardens, EN9 1BL; Timothy Harrisson, Pond Lane, NR8 6PP; Garras Tomboulogiou, Girdlestone Walk, N19 5DP; Mark Smith, Kelsey Avenue, Berkshire; Antony Hill, Finlay Close, ME13 7SH; Colin Anthony, Crowder Park, TQ10 9DB; Kay Walford, Bilson , GL14 2LJ; Natalie Chambers, Marmian Drive, YO3 9UX; Jason Baunes, Beatty Cottages, ME3 9PE; S Hadaway, Templewood Lane, SL2 4BG; Colin J Bayes, Blakes Hill, WR11 5QN; Matthew Bond, Hewish Road, N18 1PS; Richard Plastow, Dimsdale Street, SG14 1PH; Richard Broadhead, Douglas Road, B27 6HP; Matthew Eley, Prospect Close, DA17 5EB; Crash Reader, Nightingales, PE6 8RU; Alan Packard, Fulmar Road, RM1 25U; Stephen France, Addington Grove, SE26 4JX; Nicholas Currie, Lynwood Avenue, DY6 9AL; Ian Wilson, Osprey Road, RG22 5PR; Michael J Brown, Towngate, WF5 OQD; Mark James, Crosswood Crescent, EH14 7LX; Mark Woodcraft, Thongsley, PE18 7PA; Michael Gilby, St Georges Road, NE30 3JZ; Gary Wedge, Newhall Street, WS11 1AD; Nigel King, South Weald Road, CM14 4QZ; Nicholas Bennett, Nightingale Square, SW12 8QJ; Stephen Wood, Woodhouse Road, M31 2WU.

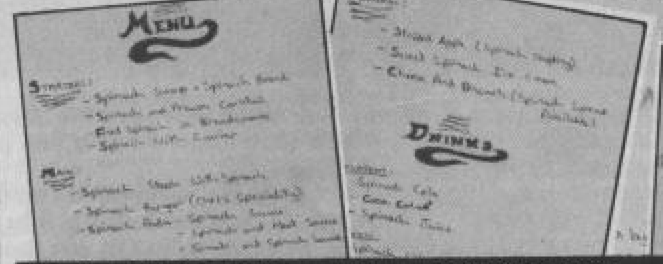






James Ratcliffe also went the menu way, supplying the bill of fayre from THE OCTOPUS ARMS which included such culinary delights as Shark Fin and Spinach Loaf with Anchor Biscuits and Spinach Custard for afters. To complete the meal, why not try and After Spinach Mint?





Matthew Hobbs sent in a complete presentation pack for Popeye's restaurant, including an advert, menu and recipe for a Spinach Burger. Excellent stuff, but only Popeye would go for spinach ice cream . . .

THIRD 128 COMPETITION

Well, my leetle Frenchipoos competition entrants - 'ere are les results for the Third 128K Spectrum Competition. If you cast your minds back to CRASH issue vingtneuf (or 29 to you non-French speaking persons) you will recall Jacques, the loonie French Comps Minion who finally collected up his string of onions and smelly garlic and went back au Continent. Soon, I hope to be off on my hols — don't expect a postcard, there's simply too many of you!

The observent person who ringed all the changes and had his entry out of the empty garlic box is **Kevin Earley**, of Lansdowne Road, CR9 2JA and a shiny new 128K Spectrum is on the way to him. The runners up in this competition all get fabulous CRASH T-shirts.

RUNNERS UP: Darren Skinner, Oak House Lane, PE22 OPT; Mr H R Collings, Field Way, GU12 4UN; Mr A Daniels, The Crescent, SP10 3BJ; Ian Webb, Kingsland Avenue, Northants, NN2 7PR; James Cox, Bastwell House, BB1 9TY; Adam Fletcher, Tivoli Road, GL50 2TD;

BATCOMP RESULTS

Those awfully decent people at OCEAN offered copies of their CRASH Smash game *Batman* to the first fifty people who correctly solved the Batwordsearch in Issue 29. If your name's listed below then you'll have your very own chance of rescuing Robin from the dastardly clutches of Joker and Riddler.

Jaime Sykes, Daykin Close, S75 5HA; Barry Davies, Nuttall Street, L7 1PP; Kevin Smith, Lansdowne Street, DL3 ONL; Panez Saleh, Byron Avenue, E12 6NH; J B Hercules, Broomfield Road, DA6 7PA; Steven Nicholls, Stileman House, London E3; Daniel John Smith, Roundways, HA4 6DZ; J Newall, 68 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 9SG; Ben Robinson, Redgrave, IP22 1RY; Mr A Garner, Wingham House, SE26 6BY; Peter Bedford, Crookston Road, SE9 1TE; Andrew Dean, Raby Road, L36 4HH; David Stevens, Wellwood, CF3 7JP; Damon Bevan, Elm Court, GL15 6PG; David Coleman, Hailsham Road, BN26 6NL; Steven Davies, Britannia Road, L45 4RN; Mark Chambers, Randall Hill Road, TN15 7BN; Peter Bodkin, New Road, PO8 ONR; Khalid, Gladstone Park Gardens, NW2 6LA; Michael Chandler, Bonar Crescent, PA11 3EQ; Dan Terhell, Rockanje, The Netherlands, 3235 BJ; Ian Lewis, Oakhill Road, KT21 2JG; Stephen Cheesman, Haldene Close, S80 4JX; Jason Worrall, Overpool Road, L66 2JE; Andrew Roberts, Strandrigg Road, FK2 OEB; Oliver Critchley, Roybridge, PH31 4AN; Christopher Coles, Grove Road, S63 6PG; Jamie Garrett, St Catherines Road, RH10 3TB; M Robson, Arnold Street, NE35 9BA; Carl Richards, Main Road, S9 5HL; Stephen Stewart, Cheviot Avenue, G78 2DR; Paul Stewart, Cheviot Avenue, G78 2DR; Philip Harrison, Meadow View Road, S8 7TN; Michael Kentish, Longworth, OX13 5ET; Mark Bol, Alphen A/D Ryn, Holland; Geoffrey Marks, Station Road, CO16 OHD; Simon Dando, Govilon, NP7 9PP; George Taggart, Nelson Street, PA15 1TV; Chris Mokes, Wetherby, LS22 4YU; A Dimashio, Junction Road, DA1 2BA; Scott Marjoribanks, St Giles Square, FK1 4JH; Gary Soat, Hazelton Road, CO4 3EB; Mark R Akroyd, Church Lane, HD4 6JE; N A Grantham, Irving Road, CV1 2AX; Graham Fulcher, Hale Road, IP25 7AX; Philip Jenkins, Birchgrove Road, CF4 1RS; BJ Heath, Llangovan, NP5 4BT; Mr R Bird, Belle Vue, BA3 2BS; Stephen A Graham, Green Lane, CA2 7QB; Carl Tandy, Partridge Avenue, ME20 6LS.

DESERT RATS

The fifty lucky people listed below will all be receiving copies of *Desert Rats* through their letter boxes in the very near future. Your faithful Minion had a quick peek at the questions they had to answer and instantly retired to the broom cupboard to recover over a nice cup of brew.

Mr I Hudson, Deepmore Close, DE13 7AY; K Bainbridge, Westlands Road, DL3 9JJ; Stuart Sim, Caer Wetral, CF33 6HL; Shane Parker, Berrows Mead, Bristol; Ian Packham, Mayfield Avenue, G76 7AW; Mr R Bird, Belle Vue, BA3 2BS; Andrew Wooden, Brafferton Drive, TS23 3RR; D Parker, Burwood Avenue, NG18 3DZ; Peter Simonds, Lawn Lane, CB6 2RE; Ian Packham, Mayfield Avenue, G76 7AW; Charles Rust, Spenser Road, MK40 2BE; Mrs A L Cutting, Cambridge Road, Kent; R Judd, Croxdale Terrace, NE1D ORR; B Hurt, Portland Street, LN5 7LG; Paul Stewart, Cheviot Avenue, G78 2BN; Mr K B Wise, Brookside, OX12 OJL; Kerry Bostock, Nant Mawr Road, CH7 2BS; Mrs Betty Cuthbertson, Saltwell Place, NE8 4QY; Alaistair Rust, Crescent Road, GL10 2AR; D Markillie, Marshall Road, CB1 4TY; Mr J Knowles, Dracaena Crescent, TR27 4EN; A J Markham, Bishops Walk, NR31 9BQ; M Dawe, Berrows Mead, Bristol; Kevin Fisher, Bagstone, GL12 8BD; B W Thomas, Poyser Street, Clwyd; G Parker, Thorpelands Avenue, NG19 0PF; Mr G Watkins, Balaam Street, E13 8RE; Neil Lightning, Hinxton Hall, CB10 1RQ; D Simpson, Shrewton, SP3 4HB; David Hogson, Redworth Road, DL4 2JJ; W C Hurley, Marsh Common , BS12 3JX; D Adams , Suffolk Place, South Wales; Giles Mead, Belvedere Drive, HULL 4AX; Mr R Cuthbertson, Saltwell Place, NE8 4QY; G Gittins, Factory Road, LE10 ODS; Andrew Nixon, Carrick Gardens, ML4 1NU; Nicholas Smith, Oil Mills Road, PE17 1TT; P Thomason, Moston Lane, M10 9JT; D Hill, Cuxton Meadows, PL20 7NG; Christopher Jack, Chamberlain Way, HA5 2AZ; Toby Poston, Fambrodge Road, CM3 6NL; Richard Lyons, Mary Street, S80 3JE; G W Wheeler, Manor Road South, SO2 7DS; John Hewitson, Newmilns, KA16 9LS; Mr I Jones, Carrswood Road, Manchester; Jonathan Perkins, Hillside Road, GU27 3RL; Mr A Draper, Erdington Hall Road, B24 8DN; Steve Fullard, Nicolas Road, M21 1LR; D A Reilly, Ivinson Road, BB3 OEN; David Nosmagorf, New Dover Road, CT1 3ED.

GETTING WITH THE BEAT

The three lucky people listed below who successfully put their thinking caps the right way around on their bonces will soon be owners of a CHEETAH *SpecDrum* kit. If you've been following Simon Goodwin's TECH TIPS column you'll know the *SpecDrum* is lotsa fun — good job the ZZAP! crew haven't got hold of one; the noise would be intolerable. All the runners up receive a voucher worth three pounds, redeemable against a *SpecDrum* bought direct from CHEETAH via their mail order service. Here's the trio of winners:

George McDonald, Rose Avenue, CO3 5RU; Jon Miles, Moss Road, WD2 6EW; Brendon Woodhouse, Glen Street, NE31 1NG.





A RUBBER ARMY AWAITS THE CALL TO DUTY!



Oh dear oh dear! We've had to castigate the Competition Minion for letting you competition entering types down — in setting up the Split Personalities competition in the last issue, our Minion forgot to mention an extra prizipoos that each of the fifty winners will receive.

You see, a veritable army of PET HATES has invaded CRASH Towers and is lurking up in Auntie Aggie's office, just waiting to be sent out with the prizes next month. These delightfully crafted rubber likenesses of two famous world leaders have been squeaking away angrily ever since they read the July issue and found they hadn't got a mention (you know what these publicity-seeking politicians are like).

So here they are, arranged in all their glory out in the sunshine — fifty PET HATES, just waiting for fifty lucky prize winners in the Split Personalities competition to win them. The Comps Minion has been banned from eating sticky buns for a fortnight and is currently well miserable as a result. He won't forget to mention prizes again!

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Please use block capitals and write clearly!

Name ....

Address ....

....

postcode T SHIRT SIZE ....

Send your coupon to: **CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

My top five programs are:

TITLE	VOTE OUT OF TEN
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

CRASH HOTLINE WRITE IN COUPON

Please use block capitals and write clearly!

Name ....

Address ....

....

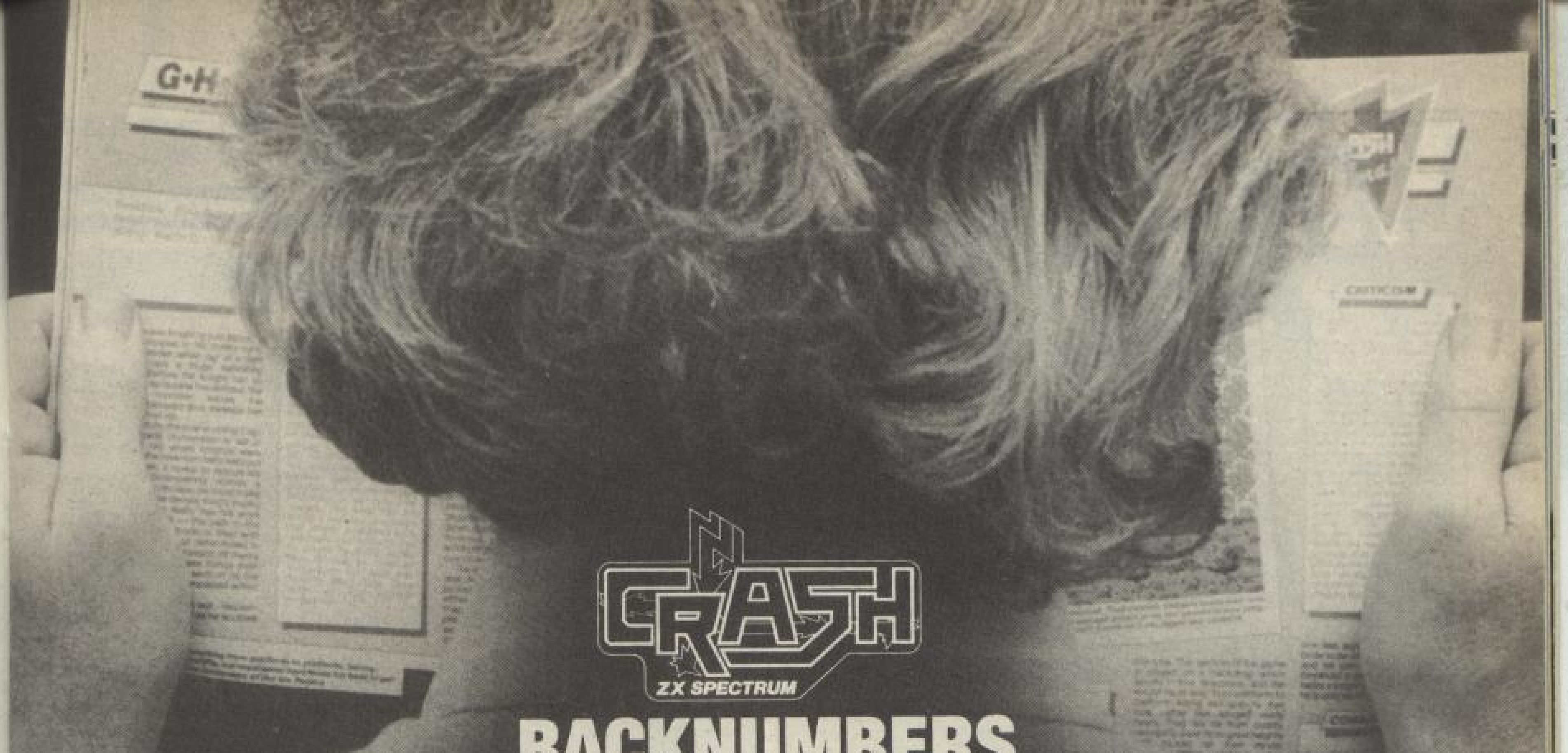
Postcode ....

T SHIRT SIZE ....

Send your coupon to: **CRASH HOTLINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

My top five favourite programs in descending order are:

TITLE	PRODUCER
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



CRASH ZX SPECTRUM

BACKNUMBERS
Fill That CRASH Gap . . .

3:April 84 ●Missile Command games●Living Guide●Code Name Mat

4:May 84 ●The Quill Utility●Graphics utilities●Microdrive●'Pengo' games●Living Guide

10:Nov 84 ●Battlefield Joystick — comparisons●Deus Ex Machina

17:Jun 85 ●Denton Designs●Frankie●Spectrum surgery●Sinclair Story 3●Knight Lore Map 1●Underwurlde Map 2●Tape to Microdrive●Leonardo Graphics utility●Datel sound sampler●Artist: David Thorpe

18:Jul 85 ●Gremlin Graphics profile●Artist Bob Wakelin●Sinclair TV●Tape Magazines●Leonardo utility part two●CRASHBACK looks again at games in issue 8●Gyron Map of Atrium●Modems round-up●And the cover that had the Jehovas Jumping!

19:Aug 85 ●WITHOUT PAGES 123,124,125 and 126. WITH:●CRL Profile●Pull out Oliposter — Fighting Spectrum●Mirrorsoft Profile●Inside the Timex 2068●Round Up of BASIC compilers●On the Cover Artist Rich Shenfield●Maps of Dynamite Dan and Shadowfire

20:Sep 85 ●ALIEN 8 and DUN DARACH maps●Electronic Pencil Company Profile●Part Two of BASIC Compilers Round-up●The 64K Spectrum●Design Design Autoprofile, Part 1●Rod Cousens interview

21:Oct 85 ●Previews of MARSPORT, ASTROCLONE, ELITE●NODES OF YESOD map●Holografix profile — how to make a Hologram●Crashtionnaire analysis●Platinum Productions profile

22:Nov 85 ●Feature on small computer magazines — looking at the opposition●Microdrive tips and hints in TECH NICHE and part two of the fast storage feature●Susan Rowe is on the Cover●An inside look at Fantasy Gamebooks

23:Dec 85 ●Visit to Melbourne House●Minson goes Surfing●The Design Design autoprofile ends●Computer graphics feature — On The Cover is Dave Beeson from Central TV●Scary cover and Scary Preview of Friday 13th

Xmas 1985/6 ●On the Cover Special — our very own Oliver Frey occupies five pages●Profile of the Gargoyle Games crew●Lloyd's Lookback, 1985 revisited●Hewson Consultants profile●Short story●Festive Fun and Frolics

25:Feb 86 ●Durell — the profile●A chat with the Microsphere team●Double Dose of Jetman●Gremlin Graphics bring a Ninja to the Spectrum●TECH NICHE looks at a FORTH add-on and examines extensions to ZX BASIC

26:Mar 86 ●ST BRIDE's Profile● A first look at the Spectrum 128●Micronet 800●Romantic Robot's Multiface One under scrutiny●Diary of 2186

27:Apr 86 ●Massive 23 page Playing Tips Supplement●1985 Readers Awards results●Mel Croucher interview●Imagine profile●Round up of 128K games●A visit to the first Play By Mail convention

28:May 86 ●Update on the Fanzine scene●MARTECH profile and PLANETS preview●DIY Composite Video Interface●Inside Cheetah's SpecDrum●FRONTLINE Mini Strategyback●CRASHTIONNAIRE 86 analysis

29:Jun 86 ●First PBM MAILBOX and CRASH GALLERY●SpecDrum listing●Homegrown software●REALTIME profile●Compilations compared●Maps of CYLU, SIR FRED, SABOTEUR and Parts 1 and 2 of TANTALUS

30:Jul 86 ●More CRASH/RAINBIRD Gallery●More Homegrown Software●THE BIRTH OF A GAME: some early entries●Good Games by DESIGN●Luna Jetman returns

Issues 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 are now out of stock.SORRY! Back issues are going fast — better get your orders in quick. It's probably worth telephoning if you want to order early issues, as we're getting short. And if you missed issue 19, we can now complete the gap in your collection with a trimmed down version, which has a tasteful sticker added to the front cover announcing the fact!

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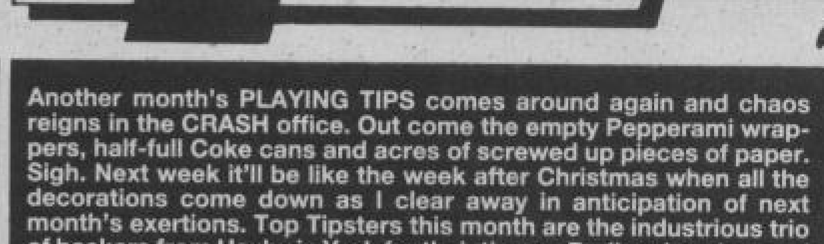
Another month's PLAYING TIPS comes around again and chaos reigns in the CRASH office. Out come the empty Pepperami wrappers, half-full Coke cans and acres of screwed up pieces of paper. Sigh. Next week it'll be like the week after Christmas when all the decorations come down as I clear away in anticipation of next month's exertions. Top Tipsters this month are the industrious trio of hackers from Haxby in York for their tips on *Redhawk* and map of *Jack the Nipper*. Top Cartographer prize goes to A M Ferinhough **of Bromsgrove in Worcestershire for his artistic indulgence in the form of a *Pentagram* map. Are we good to you are are we good to you, eh?**

As for the Girlie Challenge **. . . What can I say except: BUNCHA WIMPS. After the first highly threatening letter I received from Melissa Rookhead and the reply which I printed in last month's PLAYING TIPS I haven't heard a dicky bird from Chateaux** C&VG**. I even sent them a copy of CRASH with the page number of PLAYING TIPS written in large girlie letters in case they had missed it. But alas nothing. What a cop-out, eh? It seems as if I am the only Girlie Tipster after all.**

Graeme *Doc Marten* Kidd **rang up** C&VG **to speak to the elusive and possibly non-existent Miss Ravenflame. Whether it was she who spoke to our beloved —ED or one of the secretaries is less than entirely clear, but whoever it was expressed an opinion that mud wrestling was 'unladylike' and wouldn't I rather do something a bit more dignified? Wimp! I'm already in training as you can see from the picture. . . . Lolita Loren, British Ladies Wrestling Champion passed on a few hints to me down at Ludlow's STARLINE club the other evening.**

See you at the PCW **show Melissa, drearie. We'll have a proper shoot-out then. Paah.**







SPIKY HAROLD

Here's a POKE for that cute game, *Spiky Harold* as sent in by **Peter Custerson** from Mid Glamorgan. If you type this bijou program into your computer then your little hedgehog will have up to 128 lives. This makes everything a whole lot easier when it comes to avoiding all the nasty bug-eyed monsters in the game.

```
5 REM SPIKY HAROLD POKES
10 BORDER 0 : PAPER 0 : INK 7:
CLEAR 26539
20 INPUT "NUMBER OF LIVES
(1-128)"; L
30 IF L<1 OR L>128 THEN GO
TO 20
40 PRINT AT 0, 4; "START SPIKY
HAROLD TAPE"
50 LOAD"" CODE : POKE 23341,
201 : RANDOMIZE USR 23296:
POKE 34560, L: RANDOMIZE
USR 34000
```

GHOSTS AND GOBLINS TIPS

With the POKEs we've printed this issue and these tips from **N Cooper** from Peterborough and **Andy Lowe** and **Glen Capper** from Stoke-on-Trent you should be able to fight your way quite deep into the game. These hints should enable you to get to the end of Section Two and many steps nearer to rescuing your beloved girlfriend.

SECTION ONE

Shoot all the Zombies, plants and birds. Try to pick up all the bonus cauldrons. At the end of the main section of the landscape you meet the large Demon. At first he is the land of nod snoozing merrily, but he wakes up pretty sharpish if you stray too close to his awesome bulk or shoot him inadvertantly. Fire a quick barrage of shots at him and immediately jump towards him shooting rapidly. If this doesn't kill him, keep jumping left and, in mid-air, turn to face him, shooting for all you're worth..

Once he is destroyed, you can progress over the river and into the dark and murky forest. Be prepared for the double bird attacks and keep moving right. When you see the jumping Ogre (Fatty Stomper) use a method similar to that used against the Demon. Pick up the key and progress to STAGE TWO.

STAGE TWO

As soon as you get in the Ice Palace, start to walk and then jump onto the level where the nasties come from. When you are on that, jump up and keep jumping until you get to a long level. Walk along this to the right, killing any floating Teddy Bears that attack you. When you get to the end of this platform, jump off and when you land kill the plant. Jump onto the level that moves up and down. When it is going down, jump onto it and keep walking. Although it seems as if you are falling you will land on this platform. Then jump over the gap and you arrive in the Ghost Town.

Start walking through it, but don't kill the first nasty that presents itself to you, but kill the second, third and fourth. Then you get to a 'pyramid' of ladders with ogres all around. Don't kill the first one, but run up the ladder. Kill the ogre that runs at you from the right. Then walk up the ladder until you can just see the feet of another 'Gorilla'. When he is as far left as possible, run up the ladder as fast as your short stumpy legs will carry you. Walk right and up the next ladder. You now meet another Ogre which may fire at you. If he does, jump over the missile he throws at you. Walk to the right and kill the ogre there.

Go down the ladder when the ogre below is as far left as possible and run to the right. Kill off this Ogre and again jump over anything he throws at you. Walk to the left then right and scamper down the ladder when the ogre below is at the far right. Go left and do as above. Then go down the ladder and stomp onwards until the blue Gorilla (*sounds like you've been putting something funny in your cocoa, Mr Cooper*) has gone.

Walk to the right and jump onto the platform. When you are on the moving platforms, just keep moving to the right, shooting all the birds and when you fall off, keep shooting or else you fall in the water and get all wet (and dead). When the two jumping Ogres attack, kill the one that bounces immediately, then kill the other one. A key will now come down from the top of the screen and you can progress to level three which I shall tell you how to get through next Issue ....

Psst.. Wanna POKE Secrets!

TRANZ-AM FOLLOW UP

In response to **Paul Longbridge**'s letter in the June issue concerning the elusive **Tranz-am** POKE for infinite lives, **Daragh Farren** from County Dublin in Ireland has sent in this POKE which gives you just that. Take it away Daragh, and I hope this makes your game better, Paul.

POKE 25446,0

PYRACURSE TIPS

Hot from **Hewson's** come these tipettes for *Pyracurse* to help you get started on the trail to find Daphne's father so everyone can go home for a nice cup of tea and a buttered scone.

At the start of the game, put Daphne into Lead mode and enter the room below the gateway. She is the only person able to locate the sculptured chest key, needed to release the weapon and reincarnation fluid later in the game.

Daphne can give one of the two male characters a big Girlie kiss every 30 seconds to re-charge his energy. To do this go into Lead mode so that Daphne replenishes them at every opportunity. Daphne cannot herself be re-charged, so keep her in a secluded spot free from the attentions of the marauding monsters. Use the other characters for really dangerous exploits.

Sometimes situations require all the characters to perform simultaneous actions. The positioning of each character may be necessary before a task is completed. When tasks are attempted frequently, a character may become entrapped within the ancient stonework. Usually it is possible to release the victim with another character armed with the correct implements. Because of the perspective, you may find that keyboard control is easier than using the joystick.

That was a tastette of tips for the game. More follow next issue . . . so don't start moaning that I've given the game away.

REDHAWK — THE SOLUTION

In the July Issue we printed some very vague tips to get you started on *Redhawk*. This Issue, however we proudly present ***REDHAWK — THE SOLUTION***! Now you can change *Kevin Oliver, Super Wimp* into *Redhawk, Super Hero and Doer of Good Deeds* and make him do anything you like . . . well, almost.

Apparently, the tips we published last month had a few tiny mistakettes in them and one huge foul up. The bomb at the power station is NOT a hoax, so I don't know where we got that idea from . . . Anyway, those regular tippers from Haxby in York, **Chris Smith**, **Jason Bean** and **D Austin** have been romping their way through some more games this month and here's a solution to *Redhawk*.

There are three places you really need to know about in the game. These are Oxford Gardens, Smallman Street and Brook Court. At these locations the exits are to the west and can only be accessed by going to them by taxi or by flying as *Redhawk*. Three items can be found at these locations: the cat which is given to the RAT, the wellies which are worn as *Redhawk* so FUSOR cannot kill him when he strikes with a lightning bolt. And finally, a pair of gloves which are given to the scientist (must be before 15.00hrs.) when you are *Kevin*. The scientist will then do an analysis of them and tell you that they show traces of explosives. These gloves are then given to the professor. The pink tube found on the train is given to Lesley.

A magnet is found at the power station. This is taken by *Redhawk* and given to TECHNO. When *Redhawk* is given a radio in return for catching the first mugger, drop it, change to *Kevin* and pick it up again. *Kevin* can now listen to the radio and find out when robberies and muggings are taking place.

On FUSOR, the RAT, TECHNO and MERLIN are cards. To get the cards, examine. . . . (name) then type TAKE (colour) CARD from (name). This will work with all except Merlin. To get a card from Merlin, enter the gallery as *Kevin* and examine MERLIN. Then say KWAH and examine MERLIN again. Then proceed to take the card.

At the Warehouse there is a vase. This is found by examining the Warehouse and is taken to the museum and given to the curator. In return he gives you a book. Read it and you are given some important information. (To get into the museum initially, you must be *Redhawk*).

When all four cards have been collected and the information gleaned from the book, the gloves given to the Professor and the pink tube to Lesley, you must go to Heath station and drop the radio. Type in the following all in one sentence. . . . D, D, S, E, E, U, say "KWAH", U. Then you will be at the Reactor Complex. Hit the professor and insert the cards into the bomb in the same order in which you found them. When this is done you have completed the game.

Points to remember: every time there is a mugging, arrest the mugger and take a photo. This ensures that your popularity is kept topped up so that you keep the radio. Also, only become *Redhawk* when it is really necessary.

STARSTRIKE II CHEAT

Remember the cheat in **REALTIME**'S *Starstrike I* where you typed in *I wanna cheat* and the game obligingly obliged? Well, those crafty people up in Leeds have done something very similar in *Starstrike II*. Two issues ago I printed a hefty program from **Phil Churchyard** for infinite everything in the game. Those of you with sensitive fingers and weak wrists who want something less energetic to help you play the game will find this cheat discovered by **Antony Smith** of, coincidentally Leeds(!) rather useful. **Ben Stone** gave **REALTIME** a quick bell and they confirmed Antony's revelation.

Pause the game and type in *HEAR AND OBEY* (with spaces in between the words). And then press keys Q, W or E for maximum power on lasers, shields and fuel. Re-start the game for hours of endless pleasure and enjoyment.

PLAYING TIPS

JACK THE NIPPER — SOLUTION

***Daren Mitchel** reckons he's the first person to finish Jack the Nipper*, as he sent in the solution to the game as shown below. I think he should share the Honour with the *Formidable Hacking Team* from York who have supplied me with the map of the game in this issue as their contributions arrived on the same day. So, here it is: a step by step guide to for your nappy-clad prankster to rise through the ranks from Goody Goody, Namby Pamby Wimp to Mischievous Little Horror, thanks to **Daren Mitchel** from Bognor Regis. The photo's on the way if you're sure you REALLY want it . . .

HOW TO GET THE PEA-SHOOTER
In the bedroom (E6), jump onto the chest of drawers and onto the cot. Bounce to the other end of the cot and onto the shelf.

HOW TO BLOW UP THE COMPUTERS
(*Don't tempt me . . .*) Go to the Police station (C7) and take the battery. Go to Just Micro shop (C4) and stand next to the mirror-like object. When the shop keeper goes into the left hand corner, walk past the mirror and the computers will blow up. Now do a runner or the shop keeper slaps your botty, increasing rash factor

HOW TO KILL THE FLOWERS
Go to I Bloom plant shop (A5), climb on the right hand shelf and take the weedkiller. Trot down to the garden (G5) and drop the weedkiller on the flowers and they die, each and every one, coo, gosh. You can shoot the flowers first to gain more Naughty Points if you're feeling particularly evil. Once the flowers are poisoned it's time you weren't there or it'll be Smacky Time.

HOW TO DO THE TEETH
At the launderette(C9), get the pot of glue from the top of the machine and waddle down to the False Teeth factory (A7). Wait until the keeper is at the far end and then jump onto the Conveyor belt nearest the door, then leggit.

HOW TO STOP SOCK PRODUCTION
Go back to the Police Station (C7) and into the cell (C8). Get the weight and take it to the Hummo Sock Factory (A6). Jump on the end of the conveyor belt and run for it.

HOW TO GET THE CREDIT CARD FROM THE BEDROOM
Go to the right of the bank screen (E4) and you should find a key. Take this to the bank (F2). Drop everything but the key. When the Safe guard moves away, drop the key. Now your pockets are empty. Enter the safe and you should find yourself in a Manic Miner-style room (E2). Jump to the top and get the object (soap powder). Press enter and go through the door. You should end up on top of the wardrobe. Pick-up the Credit card.

HOW TO GET THE BOMB, HORN, AND FREE THE PRISONERS
Get the key from the bank (F2) where you should have left it. Go to the museum (C1/2) and go through this hole again, drop the key, but keep the pea-shooter, or you're dead. Watch out for the Fireplace. On a shelf in the next room is a horn, Drop the horn by the door and go right. Ghosts start to home in on you at this point. After three rooms you see a bomb on the fireplace. Pick it up and go through the door by the horn. Go to the Police Station (C8) and into the cells. Drop the bomb and all the prisoners escape. At this point the irate policeman chase you and try and tan your hide. Run away!

HOW TO MAKE A CAT FLY
Yes, you'll believe a cat can fly. Go to the room with the horn in it and drop the pea-shooter next to the door for a quick gettaway. Sneak up behind the slumbering puss and press FIRE very loudly. The befundlled pussy cat will now sink it's claws very firmly into the ceiling and will not come down until it's been pacified by it's owner and given some Good Cat Munchies. This annoy people lots, and you gain more Naughty Points.

HOW TO FOUL UP THE COMPUTER FACTORY
Go to the bank (F2) and drop the key. When the guard moves, run forwards and pick up the floppy disc. Now go to Technology (A9) and jump at the table with one computer on it and then peg it, quickly.

HOW TO DO THE LAUNDRY
Get the soap from E2 and go to the launderette (C9). Jump onto the socks and the machines start to bubble furiously, a bit like the grown-ups.

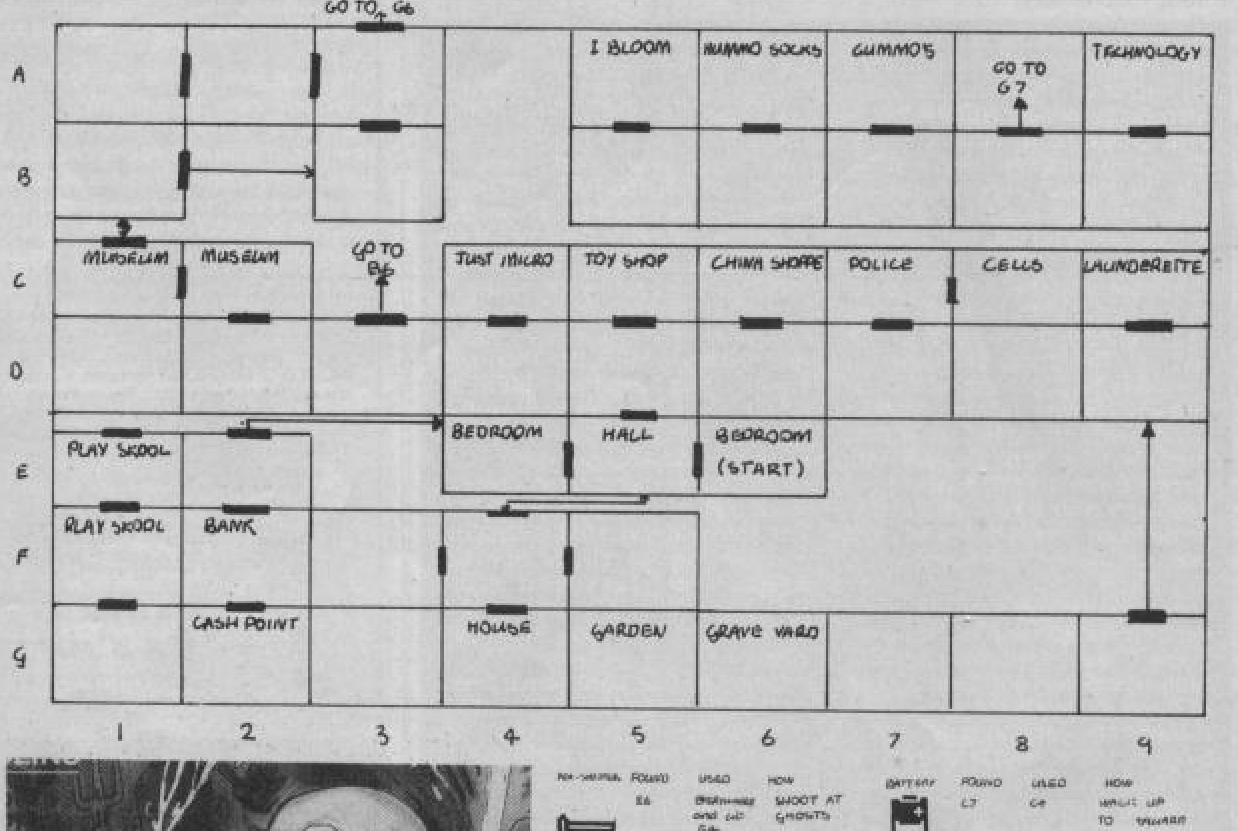
HOW TO OVERDRAW A BANK ACCOUNT Get the credit card and go to the bank (G2). Jump at the cash dispenser on the wall and it explodes.

HOW TO ANNOY THE GARDEN KEEPER
After killing the man's flowers you feel a might remorseful. Trot down to the graveyard (G6) and shoot the ghostie. Pick up the fertilizer and drop it on the nice man's rotting flowers (G5). Now the nice man is very happy . . . or is he?

HOW TO SCARE YOUR SIBLINGS
If you go into the Playschool (E1) and through the door you find the kiddie's clay on the table. Take this to a room full of screaming youngsters (F1). Now the children have a real monster to play with, tee, hee.

HOW TO MAKE THE CHINA SHOP MAN VERY ANGRY
Take the potty from the Playschool (E1). Beware because it's not empty, ho, ho. Trot down to the china shop (C6) and smash it and any other objects you are carrying.

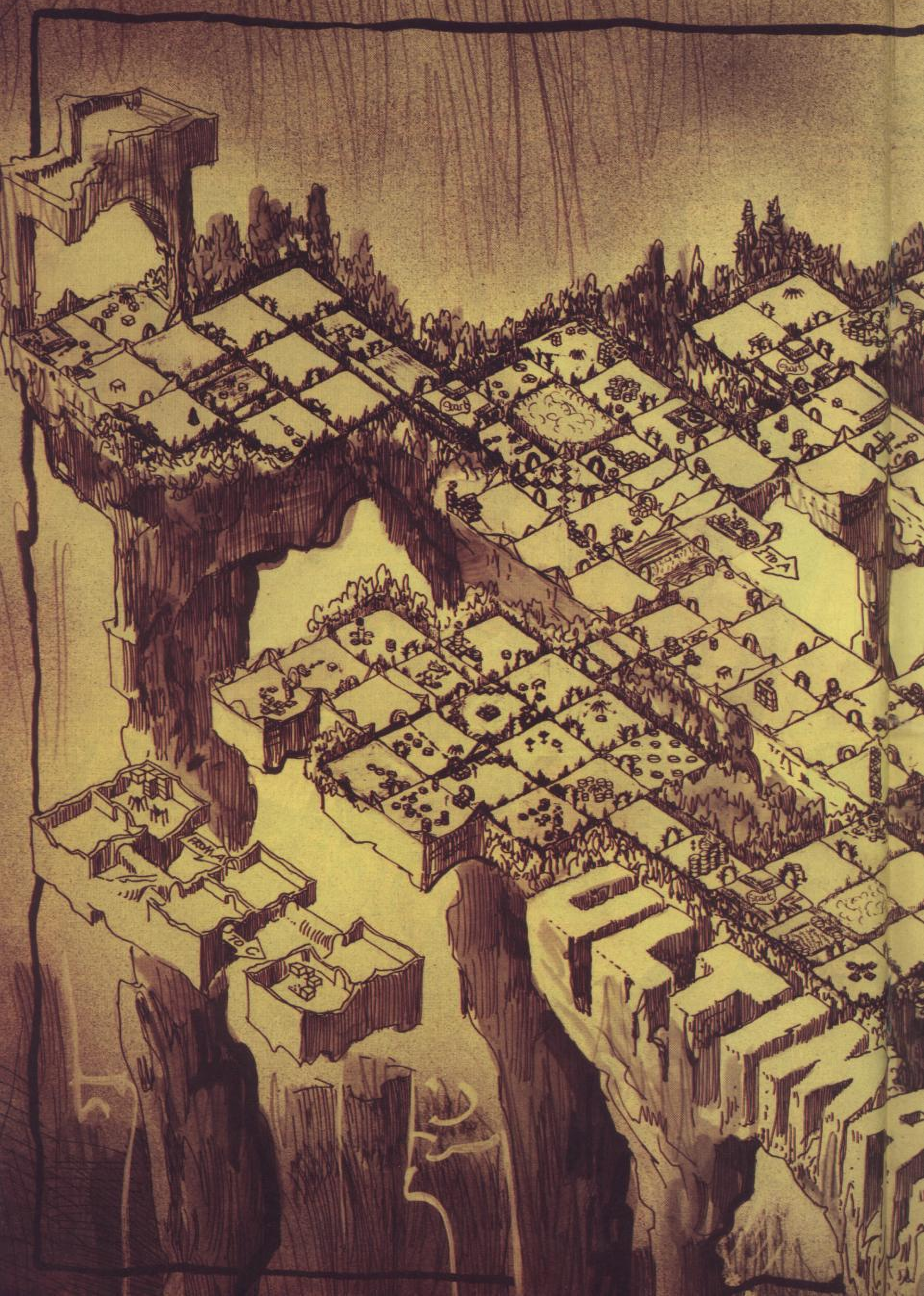
This gaem is finished. U got indaed a Lit Horror. Tee Har.








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Start
Start
Start
To A
From A
To C


PENTAGRAM
The Map
FROM B
MAP COMPILED BY A.M. FERNIHOUGH.


HEAVY ON THE MAGICK
THE MAP
LEVEL 1
LEVEL 2
LEVEL 3
LEVEL 4
AGILE STAIR
DOWN
FURNACE ROOM
WOLF DOOR
ROOM OF STINGS
ROOM OF ARROWS
ROOM OF CLAWS
ROOM OF ICTHYS
ROOM OF FLOX
ROOM OF HORNS
START
ROOM OF MISERY
ROOM OF NENI
ROOM OF TWO
ROOM OF CHAINS
ROOM OF BONES
ROOM OF PELIPE
THE CRYPT
THE CHASM
ROOST OF RABAK
EYE OF HEAVEN
WRAITVALE
GORBURG
SKYMOLE
QUADRA PORTA
SOTHIC COMPLEX
KITCHEN OF AI
WORMRING
TROLLWYND
TERTIA PORTA
ROOK OF HYDRA
METHOS
LICHGATE
THE PIT
KEY:
— BEWARE!
STAIRCASE DOWN
STAIRCASE UP
NO ENTRY DOOR
CHANGE OF LEVEL OCCURS IN THIS ROOM
LOCKED DOOR
E — ONE OF THREE EXITS!
41 — OBJECTS
MAP COMPILED BY A.BRITTON—WAKEFIELD, YORKS.

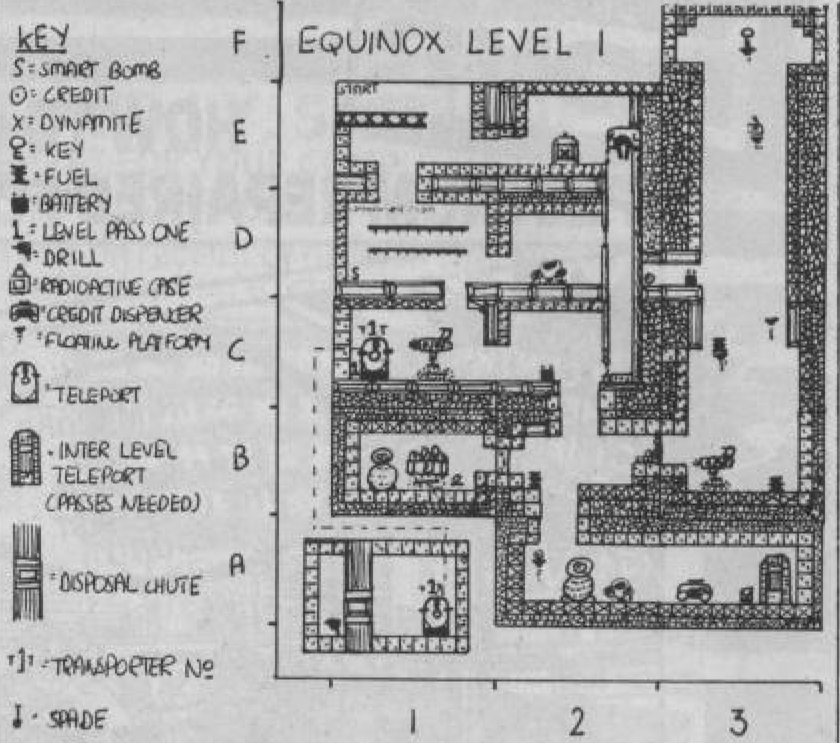
HEAVY ON THE MAGICK (KEY FOR MAP)

1) Grimoire
2) Poison smeared book!
3) Bag containing Night Shade
4) Bag of gold (opens doors with coin pictures)
5) Loaf of bread
6) Sign — Leo, Key of Nickel
7) Chest (sunflower)
8) Sign — Pisces, fishes, Key of Copper
9) Chest (jar with hemlock)
10) Cabinet
11) Sign — Virgo, virgin, Key of Alum
12) Egg — rock, protected
13) Sign — Gemini, twin, Key of Lithic
14) Snake (iron clasp) — inscribed with Undine
15) Sign on the wall: means 'do all in order'
16) Stalagmite
17) Rock snake dead cold
18) Chest
19) Sign — Capricornus, goat, Key of Magham
20) Rock
21) Cabinet (clasp — Salamander charm)
22) Scroll (CALL spell)
23) Stalactite
24) Nougat
25) Sign — Aquarius, water carrier, Key of Cobalt
26) Chest (mirror)
27) Rock
28) Rock (honey jar — food)
29) scroll (TRANSFUSION spell)
30) Sign — Aries, ram, Key of Bronze
31) Pellet — rock protected
32) Cabinet (Mantis)
33) Chest
34) Bone
35) Bone
36) Meat bone
37) Rock (poison smeared head)
38) Skull
39) Rock
40) Sign — Taurus, bull, Key of Iron
41) Bone
42) Thigh
43) Meat bone
44) Rib
45) Rock
46) Rock
47) Ulna
48) Poison smeared head
49) Nugget (silver), rock, protected
50) Cauldron of cold iron (scroll inside)
51) Chest (leaf, bag of gold)
52) Rock
53) Rock
54) Meat bone
55) Ball of copper
56) Sign — Libra, scales, Key of Brass
57) Pebble
58) Pebble
59) Pebble (disguised Erlstone)
60) Pebble
61) Bag of gold
62) Pebble
63) Pebble
64) Stalagmite and rock
65) Rock, two stalagmites, stalactite, sword
66) Stalagmite, rock
67) Bag of gold
68) Cabinet
69) Sign — Sagittarius, archer, Key of Chrome
70) Stalagmite
71) Rock
72) Stalagmite, stalactite, rock
73) Bag of gold, stalagmite, stalactite
74) Rock, jar of honey
75) Stalagmite, two stalactites, rock
76) Rock, stalactite
77) Two stalagmites
78) Two rocks
79) Two stalagmites
80) Rock
81) Rock
82) Stalagmite, loaf of bread
83) Stalagmite
84) Chest (bag of gold, garlic, foot)
85) Sign — Scorpio, scorpion, Key of Zinc
86) Stalagmite
87) Stalagmite
88) Two stalagmites
89) Meat bone
90) Sign — Cancer, crab, Key of Tin
91) Shell, jar of hemlock, jar of honey
92) Stalagmite
93) Rock
94) Meat bone
95) Cabinet
96) Nest of Phoenix
97) Chest (slat)
98) Flask, rock cake
99) Cabinet (poison smeared rock)
100) Meat bone
101) Meat bone
102) Ruby

SPELLBOUND THE ABSOLUTE NO-QUIBBLING SOLUTION

Yes, I apologise. The POKE for *Spellbound* that we published in Issue 29 does not work. Well, it does but it doesn't enable you to finish the game, if you see what I mean. **Daniel Rendall** of Cleveland and everyone else who wrote/phoned is right. The POKE sticks the clock at 48 hours forever and this means that you can't cast some spells as they only work when a certain amount of time has elapsed. According to Mr Rendall, if you take out all the POKEs (sounds dodgy to me..) except **POKE 27871** and **POKE 36133** everything becomes ticketty-boo and you'll be able to finish the game.

Also, my leetle Frenchipoo chickens, here is the rest of the solution for *Spellbound*, the game that seems to go on and on and on. As far as these Playing Tips are concerned anyway. All that is required after casting the release spell is to go to a room with no characters in and summon all the characters in the following order: *Elrand, Samsun, Thor, Rosmar, Banshee, Florin, Orik and Gimbal* and that, as they say will be that (I hope . . .)



EQUINOX INFINITE LIVES

With The Tips, The Map and now, The Infinite Lives POKE listed below there's no excuse for not doing well in *Equinox*. Once again you've got **Phil Churchyard** to thank.

```
1 REM Equinox infinite lives
2 REM 1986 Phil Churchyard
10 CLEAR 59999
20 RESTORE
30 LET tot=0
40 LET weight = 1
50 FOR i=60000 TO 60074
60 READ a: LET tot = tot +
weight * a
70 POKE 1,a: LET weight =
weight + 1
80 NEXT i
90 IF tot <> 297578 THEN PRINT
FLASH 1; "ERROR IN DATA!!!"
BEEP 1,0: STOP
100 PRINT #1; AT 0,7; "Start
Equinox tape"
110 RANDOMIZE USR 60000
1000 DATA 221, 33, 0, 91, 17
1001 DATA 17, 0, 175, 55, 205
1002 DATA 86, 5, 42, 83, 92
1003 DATA 221, 33, 0, 91, 205
1004 DATA 115, 8, 42, 75, 92
1005 DATA 229, 229, 229, 221,
225
1006 DATA 221, 54, 22, 1, 221
1007 DATA 54, 33, 0, 225, 17
1008 DATA 223, 0, 175, 25, 54
1009 DATA 0, 225, 17, 247, 0
1010 DATA 175, 25, 17, 158, 234
1011 DATA 235, 1, 10, 0, 237
1012 DATA 176, 201, 205, 128, 91
1013 DATA 175, 50, 17, 120, 195
1014 DATA 151, 91, 0, 0, 0
9999 STOP
```

EQUINOX TIPS

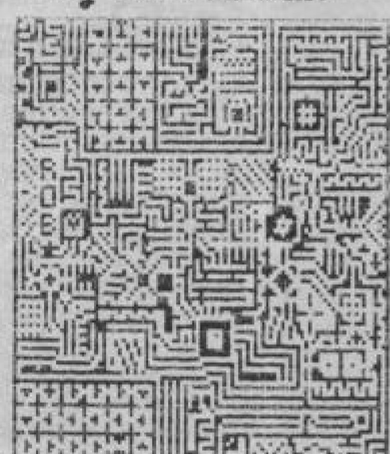
Courtesy of those nice people at Mikro-Gen, come these tips for *Equinox*. As you will already have noticed, there is also a bijou mapette of Level One of the game to help you help your Dedicated Disposal Droid clean up all that yukky poo radio-active goo on Sury Ani 7.

Here are twenty two hints which should come in handy for completing Level One.

1) Get the teleporter credit from room 14
2) Pay teleporter in room 7
3) Teleport to room 13
4) Get the hand drill
5) Teleport back to room 7
6) Enter magnetic lift in room 8
7) Exit magnetic lift in room 2
8) Use drill to open the safe
9) Get dynamite from room 2
10) Use dynamite to clear the pile of rocks in room 11
11) Get teleporter credit from room 5
12) Pay teleporter in room 7
13) Get canister from room 3
14) Go to room 7
15) Teleport to room 13
16) Dispose of canister
17) Teleport back to room 7
18) Get key from room 0 (mind your fuel levels)
19) Use key to open the door in room 11
20) Get level two pass from room 10
21) Enter trans-level teleporter in room 15
22) Exit trans-level transporter and voila, you are now on level deux

MOLECULE MAN - THE MAP.

By Mark Barnwell.



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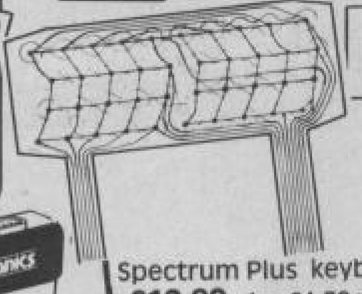
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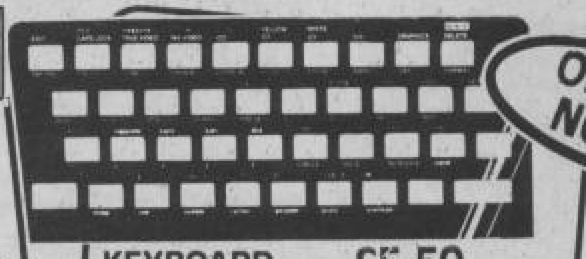
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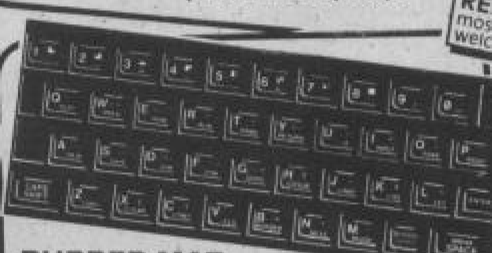


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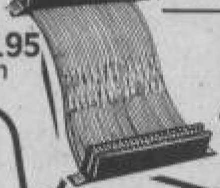
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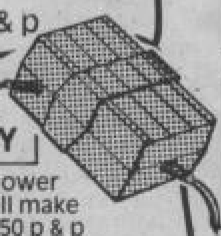


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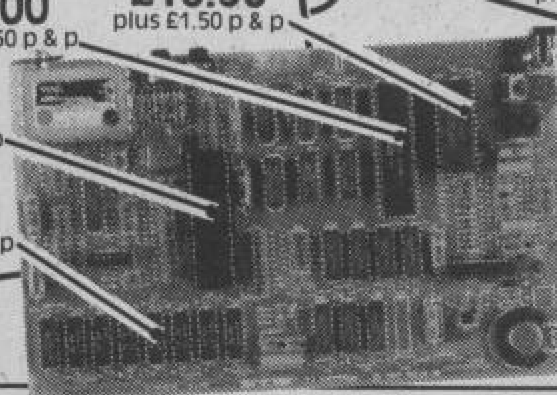
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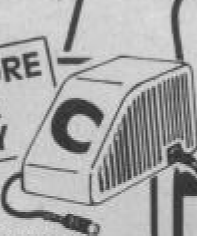


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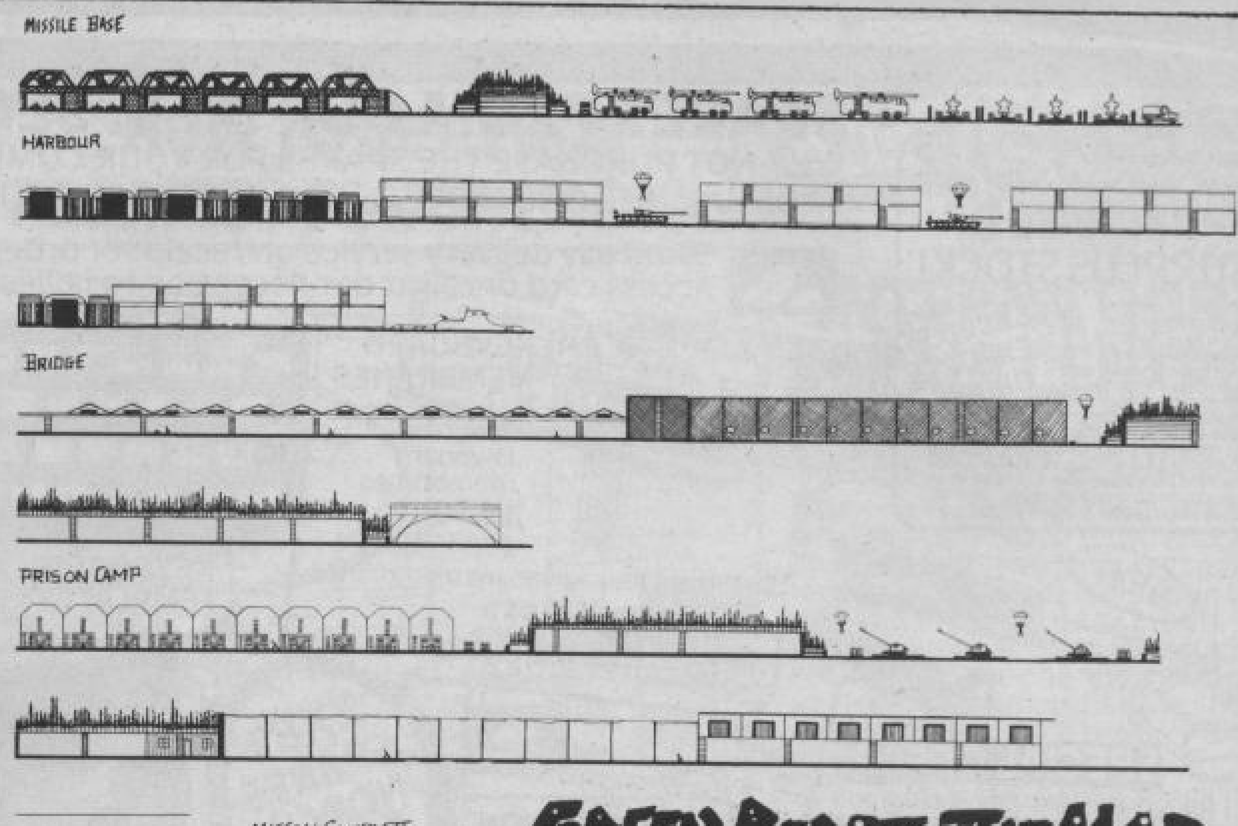
GREEN BERET

In Issue 29 I sent out a plea for anyone who had got as far as Level Three or higher on *Green Beret*. Among all the letters I received was this one from **Rajvinder Johal** from Littleover in Derby detailing how to hear those immortal words, "Mission Accomplished".

STAGE THREE
Run along the top and kill the Commandant. Go down and keep running along the bottom of the screen. If the Commandant appears running along the top while you are below, fire a grenade. The explosion also kills the people on the top platform.

At the end of this stage you must have kept three bazookas. Three men in helicopters appear. Run left and turn around. When one of the men comes down, Fire (the men climb down one at a time). Then, run right, turn and fire when the second man comes down. Then run left, turn and the finish the last one off.

STAGE FOUR
This is the longest and hardest stage of the lot. At the end of this level are enemy soldiers with flame throwers. If you run towards them they incinerate you. If you try to duck those nasty soldiers also duck down and fry you to a frazzle. The only way to beat them is to jump towards them and when you're close enough, stab them. Thankfully, there are only three or four of these flame-throwing maniacs. When you have finally killed them, the screen goes black for a few seconds and then "Mission Accomplished" appears.



GREEN BERET-THE MAP

GHOSTS AND GOBLINS POKE

For anyone who's having trouble keeping the brave and fearless knight in his underpants in *Ghosts and Goblins*, here's a hack from **Phil Churchyard** for infinite lives and infinite time. When the hero dies his undignified death in the game, you still have to go back to beginning of the section you were currently playing, but when your nine lives reach zero, they magically flip back to nine again and you don't run out of time. Coupled with the tips we've got this issue, you should be able to get quite a way into the game.

```
10 REM Ghosts & Goblins loader
20 REM 1986 Phil Churchyard
30 CLEAR 59999
40 RESTORE
50 LET tot=0
60 LET weight=2
70 FOR i=60000 TO 60029
80 READ a: LET tot=tot+weight
*a
90 POKE i,a: LET
weight=weight + 1
100 NEXT i
110 IF tot<>51329 THEN PRINT
FLASH 1; "ERROR IN DATA!!!" :
BEEP 1,0 : STOP
120 INK 7:CLEAR 25000: PRINT
#1; AT 0,2; "START Ghosts &
Goblins tape"
130 LOAD "" CODE : RAN-
DOMIZE USR 60000: RAN-
DOMIZE USR 65477
1000 DATA 33, 113, 234, 17, 151
1001 DATA 255, 6, 11, 126, 238
1002 DATA 170, 18, 35, 19, 16
1003 DATA 248, 201, 62, 2, 50
1004 DATA 217, 140, 193, 253, 33
1005 DATA 58, 92, 201, 0, 0
9999 STOP
```

KNIGHT TYME — 48K Version

As promised in the last issue, here is the complete solution to *Knight Tyme* on the 48K Spectrum. Last month I printed tips up to Retreat. Judging by the number of letters I have received concerning *Knight Tyme*, however, I shouldn't think that there are very many people left who haven't completed the game. Anyway, lest there are any of you left who are still tearing out your hair in desperation, here is the rest of the game as sent in by **Nicholas Ferguson** from Thorpe Bay in Essex.

Wearing the Cloak of Invisibility and Boots, beam down to X8 Y4 Z1. Walk right and you will come to a barrier. It is essential that you are wearing the Magic Talisman at this point. Wait until your magic level has reached around 80% and then cast the spell to remove barriers. The barrier should disappear with a bit of luck. Take the part of the sundial from Murphy and go back to the ship (X0 Y0 Z0).

Put the part of the sundial with the other two pieces. Wait until your magic level has gone up to about 80% again and cast a lightning bolt. This will join the pieces of the sundial together to form the Golden Sundial Of Alpha. Pick it up, Unwear the Cloak of Invisibility and move the Starship to Outpost. Put on the Cloak of Invisibility, Boots and the Gasmask. Type in the co-ordinates X8 Y9 Z6. Having arrived on Outpost, walk as far right as possible and providing you have the sundial you will then receive a message from the Time Guardians saying that they have installed a shiny new Time Machine in your Space Ship.

Teleport back to the ship and walk as far right as possible to the room originally called The Lifeboat. This has now been renamed The Control Column. Once again, wait until your magic level is around 80% and cast a lightning bolt. This mends the Time Machine which has obviously suffered slightly during transit. Unwear the Cloak of Invisibility and go to The Bridge. Unwear the Gas Mask and move to ship to Retreat, then Plop Plop, then Pothos, Monopole, Eden, Starbase I and finally to the black hole called Gangrole. Go to the Control Column and launch the Time Machine. You will now be presented with a message: *Well done. You have managed to escape through the Black Hole. But upon reaching home you find that the Off-White Knight has been causing havoc by messing around with the weather. Game Over. Total Completion 100%. You have escaped from the future, and are heading back to your own time. To be continued. . . .*

So there you have it. Next issue there should be a complete solution to the 128K version of *Knight Tyme*. All tips and hints gratefully accepted into the 128 Tipping Fund . . .

WAY OF THE TIGER SWORD FIGHTING

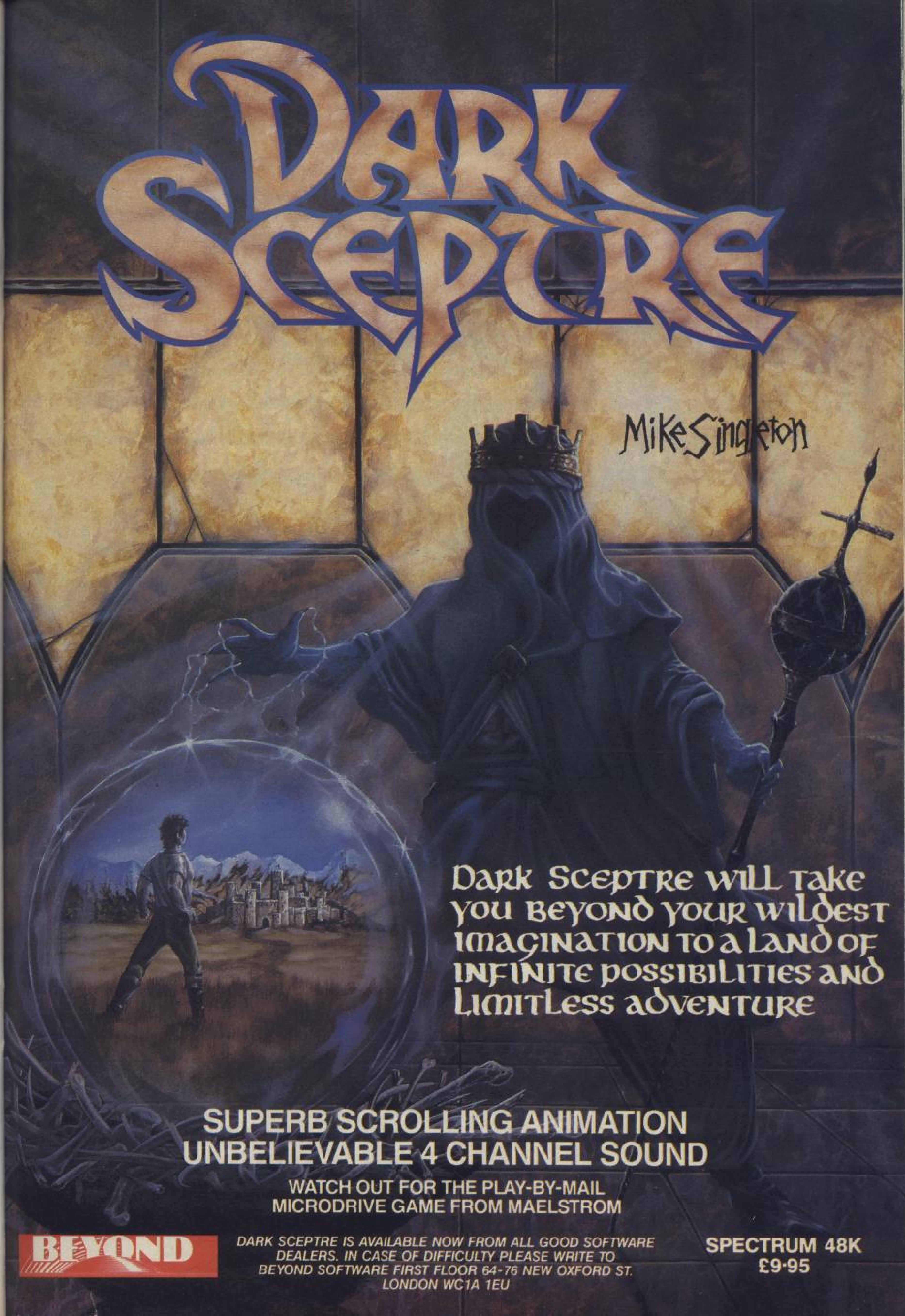
Here are some **Peter Harrap-of-Old-London-Town** tips on *Sword Fighting*. **1st Warrior** — keep doing a slash to the legs.
Ninja — keep doing a head splitter (eughh).
2nd Warrior — hit him and jump out of the way. After a while you will be able to do a continuous slash to the legs.
Armed Warrior — this critter is only vulnerable in the neck and legs. A sword ritual is also quite effective against him.

General tips — if you do get stuck in a corner try and jump out of it. Sounds reasonable to me.

That's all for this month — I'm off to get a bit more practice in with Lolita Loren so I'm on top form if and when Molasses Ravingtame rises to her challenge. Don't forget to send your tips and POKES to HANNAH SMITH, (DEFINITELY THE ONLY GIRLIE TIPSTER), CRASH PLAYING TIPS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.

I'd really like some tips on *Heartland* and *Pyracurse* in time for next month's column, while POKEs for *Pyracurse, Cauldron II* and *Bobby Bearing* would go down well.

Keep the Tips and Maps rolling in folks . . .



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THE MINION STRIKES BACK!

CALLING ALL HOAXERS, PRANKSTERS AND TRICKSTERS!











Design a Joke and win a complete Practical Joke Kit

The vile and despicable CRASH reviewing team have been making your Minion's life a misery again. And I thought they were such a quiet lot compared to those riff-raff that sail under the ZZAP! skull and cross bones. How naive and and misguided I was. Apart from Girlie Tipster Hannah Smith trying to dress me up in pretty girlie clothes and practising her make-up on me, they've suddenly taken to playing all sorts of practical jokes on Yours Truly.

You see, those wacky and zany gals at St Bride's School have just come up with a spoof adventure *The Very Big Cave Adventure*. In it, you explore a set of caves with your guide, Trixie Trinian, and have to deal with lots of weird and wonderful situations. Puns abound — for instance, there's a bull that lives in a gulley. A Gulleybull! (groan). Stacks of lateral thinking as well as punsmithing has gone into the game — there's even the world's first text-only version of *Space Invaders* in one location!

But on to the root of this Minion's current problem with the Doc Martened Editor and the rest of the CRASH Crew. The St Bride's lot are a fun-loving bunch, who like nothing better than playing jolly practical jokes on one another. They're stuck out in the depths of greenest Ireland, though, and have to get all their fun equipment from Mail Order japesters MATCHRITE, purveyors of all sorts of wizard wheezing equipment from rubber masks, electrifying ciggy lighters and X Ray Specs to pongy spray aerosols, water machine guns and exploding teaspoons. Keen to let everyone share in the fun, St Brides and their publishers, CRL, want to give half a dozen practical joke kits away to CRASH readers.

To help persuade Graeme *Doc Marten* Kidd that this was a good idea, they sent a selection of goodies from the jokemasters for him and the other CRASH reviewers to play with — hairy hands, joke flies, cobweb spray and water machine guns and so on.

And guess who's the guinea pig? Right in one. There I was, slinking back to the broom cupboard, and what did I find, strategically placed at knee height? A trip wire fixed to a water machine gun SPLOOSH! Wet Knees. SPLAT! A custard pie in the face from Girlie Smith quickly followed and then I was chased round the office by new boy Tony Flanagan who wanted to try out some of the other horrible devices on me. I ask you.

Cleaned up and settled down in the broom cupboard I sat down to a good session with a cuppa, bag of doughnuts and the latest romance from Minions and Boone and what sproings to the surface of my steaming tea? A plastic fly, floating legs to the air. BANG goes the exploding teaspoon when I try to fish it out. SPILL goes the hot tea, YAROO OUCH goes your Minion, dancing round the confines of his retreat.

That was only the beginning. For days now I've been plagued with plastic doggy do's, rubber egg sarnies, toilets that burst into song everytime I go near them, leering Frankenstein faces popping up at odd moments and all sorts of unpleasant japes. Tee Hee, goes CRASH editorial. Snarl Snarl go I.

I WANT REVENGE

Design for me, oh faithful readers, the ultimate piece of Practical Joking Hardware that I may build it according to your instructions and wreak my revenge on CRASH's beloved Editor and that awful girlie tipster. Pick one of the motley editorial crew and come up with a fiendish device, specially tailored to cause the maximum pain and embarrassment to him or her (or it).

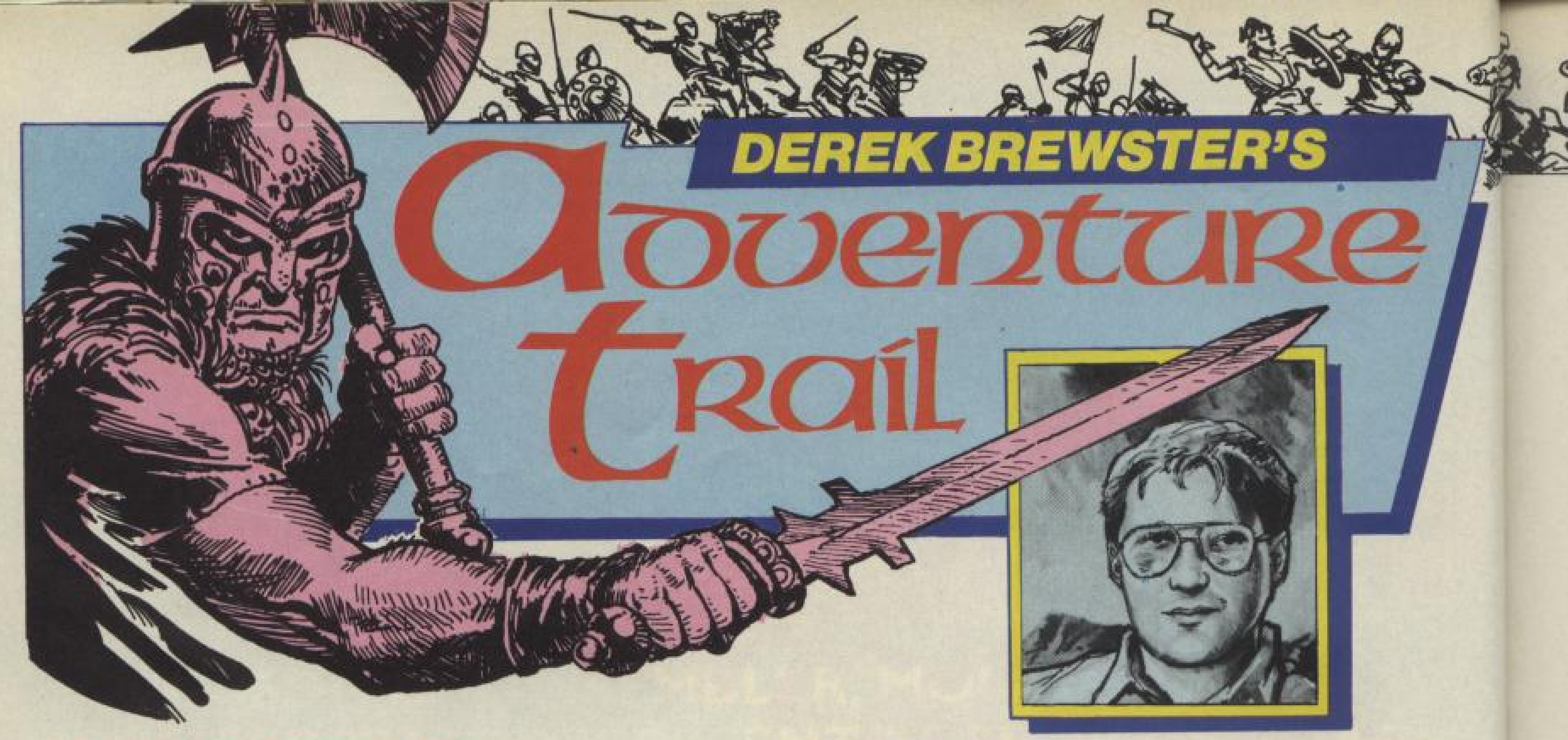
Graeme Kidd might be taken in by a special custom built pair of Doc Martens which spontaneously explode the moment he slips his dainty size ten feet into them, instantly shrinking the shoes so that he can never get them off. Girlie Hannah Smith could have a special sort of trick make-up which looks horrible, brings her out in spots and is indelible, or some Essence of Skunk eau de toilet which smells awful. Tony Flanagan could have a special sort of disc for his office wordprocessor which always tells him his disc is full when he knows it's not so he spends hours trying to find out what's wrong and feels very paranoid indeed.

So come on and get to it chaps and chapesses. Design a Practical Joke and I'll reward you handsomely with prizipoos supplied by CRL and St Brides. Best device wins its designer the following: Water Machine Gun; Hairy Hand; Joke Flies; Snow Blizzard Tablets; Balloon Water Bombs; Giant Python; Mad Dog Lighter; Talking Toilet; Exploding Teaspoon; Vibrating Handshaker; Amazing Flying Bird; Cobweb Spray and Frankenstein Mask. Five runners up are to receive slightly less comprehensive joke kits, comprising: Water Machine Gun; Hairy Hand; Joke Flies; Snow Blizzard Tablets; Balloon Water Bombs and a Giant Python.

Whizz your Japes in to THE MINION STRIKE BACK, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB and make sure they arrive by 24th August. Okay? Get thinking.







CHICKENS AND EGGHEADS

The 128K Spectrum has been around now for some time, and apart from some early commissioned software, and the exemplary efforts of MASTERTRONIC, every software house old enough to remember computers like the Oric, Enterprise, and Memotech is saving its efforts until the 128 has a proven sales record.

Admittedly, there have been questionmarks over the computer's future since the takeover by Alan Sugar, but everyone knows that it may take some time to produce a successor, and that when it arrives it will no doubt be fully compatible with the 128. May I just put forward the argument that if the successor is not compatible then this is a matter for Alan Sugar to worry about and not any potential 128 purchaser.

There has been much advice on this issue in magazines and the general consensus is that the public should wait and see. All I can say is heaven knows what would have happened to the Sinclair phenomenon if such advice was offered in 1982 amid rumours of the 48K's unreliability. Presumably, everyone would have ended up with Atari microcomputers which were (and still are) superb value for money, and the home software industry might never have gained the poise and standing it has now earned for itself.

Alan Sugar is caught in a marketing quandary over the positions of his Amstrad and Spectrum concerns. He claims far too much for the likes of the CPC 464 and its derivatives and is too dismissive of the huge Spectrum games world he has inherited. I suggest the potential micro purchaser keeps well clear of such political manoeuverings and simply goes out and buys the microcomputer which offers the best software backup at the most competitive price. If this be the 128 Spectrum then so be it. Sold in sufficient numbers, the 128 will ensure both software support in the near future, and hardware compatibility in the longer term — no matter who provides them.

SOMETHING TO CROW ABOUT?

Adventuring began with the mainframe *Colossal Cavern* and due to the inherent limitations of mainframes, text without pictures was the order of the day. Along came the ZX Spectrum in 1982 and, although many adventures remained text-only, mimicking the original, the first faltering steps were taken towards full-blown illustrations with the likes of *The Hobbit* and *Fantasia Diamond*.

Some time later, graphics (as pictures on computers are invariably called) became quite sophisticated, and respectable even, as some specialist graphic computer artists got to grips with the Spectrum, most notably **Banner** of INTERCEPTOR (*Jewels of Babylon*, *Warlord*) and **Teoman Irmak** of the old ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL (*Gremlins*, *Touchstones of Rhiannon*). Now, you might think it a little hypocritical to mention these games. After all, when they were released I refused to be swayed simply by their graphics but instead reviewed the adventure as a whole — remember this was when LEVEL 9 were releasing games with simple graphic styles but immense intricacies of plot and composition, and games as good and innovative as *Sherlock* and *Lords of Midnight* were about. The reason why good graphics could not co-exist with complexity of gameplay was simply the restriction on memory. Surely now with 128K, adventures can combine the two and produce something worth crowing about.

MASTER OF MAGIC

Producer Mastertronic
Price **£2.99**
Author **Tim Miller, Richard Darling**

The first time I saw this game was on the Commodore 64 where it had the most brilliant **Ron Hubbard** soundtrack accompanying it. Alas, the Spectrum version has no such treats, but is still a fair old game for the price.

While exploring some underground caverns you chance upon a deep black pool. A ripple on the mirror-smooth surface draws you closer to the edge and a powerful hand slides out and swiftly drags you under. It is the hand of Thelric, the master of magic, who plunges you into a strange mystical world of magic and evil.

It is written in the Book of Magic that only Thelric has the knowledge to blend time and space into a powerful enough spell to return you to your own world. He promises to cast the spell if you retrieve for him the lost amulet of immortality, for without it he will grow old and die. He teaches you some useful spells and you embark on your dangerous quest. As you leave, Thelric says 'If you do not bring me the amulet of immortality and place it on the pedestal by this pool you will never return home'. Shucks.

After the game has loaded it automatically goes into demonstration mode where, we are told, there are less objects and monsters than in the game proper. I must admit I was a bit confused as to just where the demonstration mode ended and where the game started — easy to do when you're constantly tapping the FIRE button. On starting, a menu is displayed across the middle of the screen. The options shown always include RUN, and often EXAMINE, PICK UP, DROP and so on. The cursor can be moved by joystick or via the keyboard, much as in *Spellbound*, with FIRE selecting the option. As with *Spellbound*, some selections can lead onto further menus and options.

The screen is split into many different areas. In the top right is the major window which scrolls the text telling you what's going on. The window at top left is a kind of *Out of the Shadows* depiction of the terrain you are going through with the various caves, corridors, steps and rooms shown in a very simple, thumbnail sketch manner. The instructions tell that only your actual line of sight is shown which may be a way of getting round the fact that the programming here isn't awfully good. To make matters worse the whole thing scrolls in character blocks which just looks amazingly primitive.

The display across the bottom of the screen reveals pictures of the creatures and objects you come across, and very fine representations they are too. The 'm' and the 'b' along the top represent your mind and body strength. Another curious admission in the instructions is the acceptance of the drawback of the time clock at top right stopping when the player accesses the menu which, as the instructions say, does provide time to choose carefully, but also allows a chance to stop attacking monsters in their tracks.

Magic falls into the categories of casting spells, wearing rings and drinking potions. A MAGIC MISSILE produces a fiery arrow which can be directed at any live target in sight. It has a high chance of missing, but causes serious damage should it hit home. FIREBALL causes a 15 feet radius fireball to surround you and burn any creature in this area; your player remains unharmed. ENERGY DRAIN may be directed at any creature in sight and causes the instant loss of some of its body strength. MAGICAL SHIELD produces a shielding over your skin protecting you from attack. Like all the spells, it continually reduces your mind power and you should note that this spell lasts until Uncast.

The outcome of physical combat is, naturally enough, determined by how skilled the attacker is and how well the defender is protected, but also by magical factors and luck. Once a blow meets



its target the damage inflicted depends on the weapon used and the strength of the attacker — much as you'd expect in this type of game. Should a monster be slain, any of its possessions can be collected and used to further your goals.

The monsters have some pretty nasty habits. Although they vary in intelligence, they are invariably hostile. Most alarmingly, they crave your meat to eat as well as taking a shine to your possessions while guarding their own treasure-troves jealously. Some monsters are easily scared, others will search the last place they saw you and keep searching there for a while, while others hound you into an early grave.

Given the asking price, *Master of Magic* is not such a bad game at all, and not so long ago would have commanded a much loftier price tag. Leaving aside the rather poor display of your terrain in the top left with its jerky scrolling, the look of the game is very appealing. The pictures of the objects and creatures you meet along the bottom are neat and effective with graphics of bats, vampires, skeletons and hellhounds brightening up the whole game. The menu system, similar in principle to the one used in *Spellbound* and other such games, works very well. The options given on the menu at any one point are a very good indicator of how you might proceed.

After killing a skeleton or an orc (the result being the word DEAD boldly emblazened across their picture at the bottom) you may be given the option to PICK UP, which might see you getting the dagger. Since you tend to only have enough mind power to cast two spells in the first instance you may think it wise to save killing spells for creatures who are carrying something you would like to retrieve from their dead bodies (bats use their teeth and spiders their sting so you are unlikely to get any weapons from these two). When by a door a check of the menu options reveals OPEN and, very useful when being pursued, CLOSE once you've passed through the portal. All in all, a game which grows on you the more you get into it and well worth the meagre three pounds.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy to play but takes a while to play well
Graphics: overall good but map poor
Presentation: attractive
Input facility: best played with joystick
General rating: good value

Atmosphere	84
Logic	82
Addictive quality	85
Overall	**86**

MAFIA CONTRACT II

Producer Atlantis
Price **£1.99**
Author **Neil Smyth**

Howdsa bout dis for a deally dorig-inal (original — sdupid) intraduction to dis here game and da course I wand da heaters off, afda all it dis Djuly. I could go on but my chewing gum is running out so let's just leave the smart alec accent and get stuck into this one. Yes, it's the sequel to *Mafia Contract* by the same author, from the same company (not always a certainty these days) and at the same price. If anything, this game is better then its predecessor and so I can see it featuring in SIGNPOST just as much as the first one. The graphics are just that step up from *Mafia I* and the puzzles, and the story which links them, are a real pleasure.

Again you are in Don Capolla's gang whose territory runs throughout the dark back alleys and creeping fire escapes of the Big Apple, housing the biggest den of thieves east of Chicago. In the first program, Capolla's own son had gone down and you were one of the suspects behind his untimely demise. Once again, this is a *Quill*ed game but the theme, story and its interpretation distances it from the usual run-of-the-mill release.

You are in trouble, yet again, but what else would you expect being Capolla's henchman? Last year you assassinated a rival gang leader for your boss and as a reward he has taken you into his confidence as his Number One personal adviser and bodyguard. Capolla's regime is now being threatened by a powerful gang led by Vito Rossi. Capolla has panicked and gone into hiding but not before putting out a contract on anyone he fears, including you. Not being one for half measures, and stirred on by your successes, you have decided to kill both Rossi and Capolla. If you can pull this off you are then free to get the documents detailing Capolla's Mafia gunmen, and will be able to seize control of the entire city. You find yourself in Capolla's mansion which is being raided by Rossi's gunmen. To progress any further you have to escape them and put into effect your ambitious plan.

Impressive is the way the program introduces itself with varying loading screens and sound effects — a good omen for what turns out to be a well-polished game. The pictures are slowly drawn but a definite notch up on the standard of the first *Mafia* game. RAM SAVE and LOAD are very useful as it is in the nature of this type of game that danger lurks around every corner (just for the record RAM LOAD will take you back to your SAVEd position as many times as you like before the computer is switched off). The character set is pleasantly redesigned and the game is generally attractive and well laid out.

There are some unusual screens, one with CRASH scrawled right across it, and another with ZAP. I'll leave you to find out where you come across these two but suffice to say its when something goes wrong! Only being able to carry four things at a time causes you one or two headaches in the time-honoured fashion, but generally the game is most playable and flows along nicely. Many times you find all manner of doors locked (getting the keys early on is recommended) and so I appreciated the humour when trying to bolt it out of the mansion in the car before me: 'You won't believe this, but it's locked'.

Mafia Contract II is a really good game for the price. Some of the problems are a little easy or hackneyed but overall the game is quite a good runaround.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy
Graphics: average
Presentation: fair
Input Facility: verb/noun
Response: Quill
General rating: good value

Atmosphere	88
Vocabulary	69
Logic	78
Addictive quality	81
Overall	**85**

COUNTDOWN

Producer Central Solutions
Price **£0.99**
Author **C & B Bradbury**

You are a reporter, somewhat baffled as to why a famous explorer, well-known for his contempt of the news media, should offer you an exclusive interview. You approach your destination with your editor's words echoing in your mind: 'Don't' ask me. He specifically requested you. Anyway, it'll do you good to get away from all those corruption exposes for a while'.

After a short journey across the bay, you arrive at the island retreat of Sir Justin Philips. The huge mansion looms up in the early morning mists as you reach the jetty and secure your motor boat alongside a similar craft. Approaching the imposing front entrance you notice the main doors are slightly ajar. With a gentle push you are inside. You sense a sudden movement and turn to see the doors slam behind you.

So goes the story which follows a superb loading screen for such a cheap game (commissioned loading screens can cost a fair amount on expensive games these days). Keeping the quality up, the first picture isn't bad either with very neat shading and altogether superior appearance when compared to the normal untidy line-drawn cheapy look. It is a drawing of the large entrance hall with a pair of stairs leading up to a landing with two pictures hanging from its walls. The perspective and shading are just right and the redesigned character set is a very readable set of capital letters.

Heading east from the off you meet a cloakroom, and a useful item while heading west takes you on through the library to a study where examining the typewriter reveals a clue: 'Confused already? Let's soap you're not, insert the tape to discover your lot'. The tape this sheet of paper in the typewriter refers to may well be the video tape you find in one of the remoter rooms in the mansion. In the library you see a fairly typical location description. 'You are in the library. In the centre of the room stands a low table. On it an ornately carved bowl-shaped artifact containing the remains of several cigars is resting beside a coffee-pot and cup. Along each wall are rows of well-stocked bookshelves. Doors lead north, east and west'. There are a few clues as to the lifestyle of the owner of this mansion here, and a further insight is the reply to examining most domestic items, 'It looks expensive'.

To the north is a location which at first appears pivotal but is somewhat unyielding to efforts to actually get anywhere: 'You are in a stylishly appointed lounge, containing items ranging from the prehistoric to ultra-modern. The walls are adorned with many unusual and obviously ancient ornaments, including an elaborately decorated sword, a sacrificial dagger and several grotesque carvings. The room also boasts a state-of-the-art video, TV and audio system. In the centre of the room stands an easy chair with a coffee table alongside. To the west there is a window'. I won't go through what happens when you try to make use of every item here but when you get down to the window at the end, even that's barred! Further along the way you meet a dumb waiter which is easy to operate and takes you up and down the levels and about four different shades of bathroom.

Countdown is a game composed around *The Quill* and *Illustrator*. As a cheap game it has much to offer, not least its surprisingly effective (if slowly drawn) graphics. The room descriptions are evocative and the game is well enough constructed to hold your interest for some time.



COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy to roam
Graphics: Not bad for the price
Presentation: good
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: Quill
General rating: very good value

Atmosphere	75
Vocabulary	76
Logic	77
Addictive Quality	71
Overall	**79**

REBEL PLANET

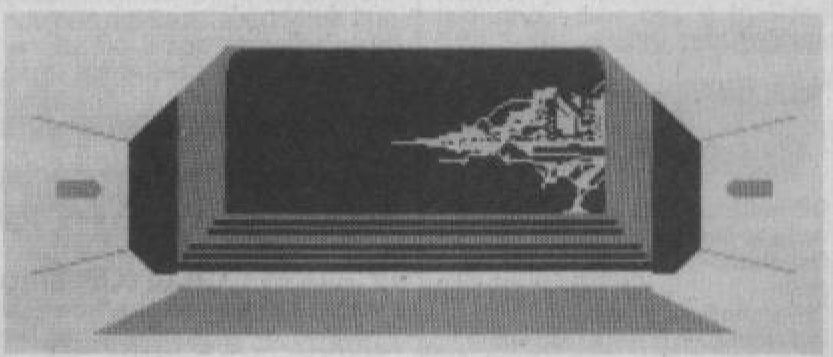
Producer **Adventuresoft**
Price **£9.95**
Author Stefan Ufnowski, Robin Waterfield

Err, right, err, I'm going to try and tell you some of the history of this one without actually knowing quite what the heck I'm on about, but there again, what's new. Well, there was the advertised SWORDMASTER series and if I'm not mistaken that had something to do with **Steve Jackson** and **Ian Livingstone**, the names behind the book which led to this one here. Then it surfaced some time later as FIGHTING FANTASY and the game was *Seas of Blood*, and it had those stalwarts of computer coding, **Mike Woodroffe** and **Brian Howarth** behind it. That game had an animated dice sequence, a combat routine, and a status page showing skill, stamina and strength. Well this game is much more mainstream without any gimmicks but is very well constructed and has an interesting set of puzzles, as you might expect from the style of the FIGHTING FANTASY books (these work by giving a set of choices which lead to pages further on into the book). Take a look at Pete Tamlyn's article on page 46 of this issue if you're still confused . . .

Your spaceship is called the Caydia. It is a merchant ship. You — well, you're some sort of agent, in fact the finest, as you've been chosen for your courage, resourcefulness and dedication to the liberation of the peoples of Earth. Your cover has been well researched: you will travel as a merchant to the planets of Tropos, Halmurus, and Arcadian all of which are a part of the Arcadian Empire.

If you are to take on the might of the huge Arcadian Empire, which tightens its grip on the galaxy by the hour, then you will need the might of some huge organisation behind you. SAROS stands for Search and Research Of Space, and has managed to send spies on ahead to gather intelligence before your arrival. Of course, it wouldn't be an adventure if this information was just placed in your lap — you'll have to work out where it is. There is a building on the planet Arcadian which houses the all important queen computer. This can be entered (and this information is proffered quite openly) by using a numerical code of nine binary digits. The underground spy network may know something to help you discover these digits. Your mission, then, is to locate the rebel leaders, learn the digits, and destroy the queen computer before it destroys you.

The program boasts an extensive vocabulary. Commands range from simple two word instructions to multiple action ships. There again, I probably dozed while I was reading the instructions and have probably missed something. Inserting a card gives you the sustenance, something you will need otherwise you could find yourself running out of steam later on. To the east is a cabin with hydro-bed and regeneration unit. Stepping into the unit has zetri waves bathing you after which you feel ready to take on the challenge and pick up the laser sword lying here. Across the corridor to the west is passenger cabin 1 with its lite-kube which, on examination, reveals a jet pak and a fuel capsule. Only thing is you can't pick them up quite yet. Typical!



The view from the spaceport on the way to save life as we know it from being destroyed by the Arcadians

out of the observation window, hardly move in true 3D motion but at least bring some movement to an adventure screen. To the south is an access corridor with a dispenser attached to one wall. The powerful EXAMINE command comes in handy here and we learn it is a sustenance system, an Arcadian one in fact, which surprised me as I thought this was one of our commands. Take a look at these examples. ASK THE DROID FOR HELP, ATTACK THE POLICER WITH THE LASER. GET THE WRENCH, THE CRYSTAL AND THE BOOK. OPEN THE DOOR, GET THE GRENADE AND THEN PULL THE PIN. You are advised to use WAIT 5, WAIT 10 and so on when you've missed the pneumatube on Halmurus. By the way, last month's review of *Human Torch* was a touch inaccurate when I reported it in the summary as being only verb/noun. It is, like this one here, quite a way beyond simple verb/noun input.

There are some useful hints on play in the instructions. Caydia has a pre-programmed flight plan (which you are warned not to alter) and its only a matter of time before it docks at its first port of call, Tropos. The only thing is, you might not be ready when it does. However, you can fool around with time with the curious commands ADVANCE CT and RETARD CT, CT standing for Caydia Time. Fooling around without knowing what you're doing could lead to the Caydia taking off without you. Its worth noting that the Arcadians have banned humans from carrying weapons and you should therefore keep your laser sword out of sight until you plan to use it.

The first frame is stylish and attractive. The stars before you,

Rebel Planet is a good adventure by any standards, what with its decorative graphics, sound plot, and useful vocabulary. It has enough to make the grade.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: difficult after a while
Graphics: good, often mirror images.
Presentation: blinding white background.
Input facility: complex sentence analysis
Response: Sluggish
General Rating: very good

Atmosphere	89
Vocabulary	85
Logic	87
Addictive quality	86
Overall	**85**

BRIAN THE BOLD

Producer Central Solutions
Price £0.99
Author Edward Beck

It is the tenth year in the reign of Good King Frederick. No more do the people enjoy a happy existence. The last few months have been a misery for each and every person of the realm. Everyone is miserable because King Frederick's beautiful daughter, Princess Leanora has been kidnapped. It is thought Bragen, an evil warlock, was behind this wrongdoing and it is said the daughter is held captive in the Black Tower. Several of the king's champion knights have failed in their quest to rescue the princess and now there is a reward for anyone who succeeds.

You are Brian, a peasant boy with very little knowledge but a great imagination. You have often dreamt of daring escapades in which you achieve great wealth. Secretly, you leave home and travel to the king's castle. The result is not altogether surprising — you are not permitted to enter the hallowed cloisters of the sovereign's castle. When you tell the guards of your intention to rescue the princess they smile and tell you to go home before you get hurt. Maybe they are right, but standing dumbstruck outside the imposing castle, your dreams take on a new clarity. It is indeed your destiny to set out for the Black Tower and rescue the fair princess.

As introductions go, the above isn't too bad as at least you come out of them knowing exactly what you have to do. What I'm not so keen on is the break in loading where you have to press a key to read (or skip) the instructions. I wonder how many other people tend to go and make cups of tea while a game is loading?

I think me reviewing this game points out the folly of a company like CENTRAL SOLUTIONS releasing a great batch of games all at the same time. Because of the constraints of time (especially in adventure reviewing) the reviewer tends to pick one or two at random from the mass of cassettes, seeing as there is nothing to distinguish between those releases of some merit from those just thrown in to make up the numbers and create the impression of grabbing a fair slice of market share. What with choosing at random, and rejecting quickly those which wouldn't load first time so as to get onto those that would, I ended up reviewing *Brian the Bold* which is not a good adventure. The location descriptions are terse and inadequate. Examining and even picking up objects is met with a puzzled silence, and the pictures are simply awful (and slowly drawn to boot).

COMMENTS

Difficulty: moderate
Graphics: awful
Presentation: Spectrum characters
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: Quill
General rating: poor

Atmosphere	54
Vocabulary	58
Logic	65
Addictive Quality	45
Overall	**58**

SIGN STUMPS

***SIGNSTUMPS** is dominated by* **FIREBIRD** *games this month with* ED LINES *being a major contributor.*

Jeffrey Bell *of **Newcastle upon Tyne** writes:*

"Please can you give me some help with SUBSUNK as I have been trying to complete it for months and months?

First, can you please tell me what ingredients are needed to make the glue and how you mix it? Also, I have found half of the map in the navigation area; where can the other half be found? Secondly, can the locker in the locker room be opened and if so, how? Where can the acid battery be found? Finally, what is on the thin shelf in the wardroom and how can you get it down without banging your head off the shelf?"

You will need ZPHVISU and UPBTU TDSBQJOHT as well as the UFTU-UVCF to make the glue. The locker in the locker room can be opened; the key is on the small shelf and you need to wear the TUSBJOFS to get it. The battery is found in the battery compartment.

Mitchell Brown *of **Bolton** is having difficulty with* SEABASE DELTA, *the follow up to* SUBSUNK, *and asks:*

"Could you tell me how to get past the TV camera and where to find the ink for the pen in SEABASE DELTA?"

To fill the pen you could go squid hunting. I haven't actually got to the room with the TV camera yet, but FIREBIRD kindly provided the following hints:
Iron the foil to make it smooth,
Reflect a beam and missile sooth,
Make a pancake in the bowl,
The TV lens is then your goal!

On the same game Stephen Parlces ***asks:***

"Please could you help me with SEABASE DELTA? I have four problems. How do I wake up the hen to lay an egg needed for the pancake? How do I mend the lift? Where do I find the ink for the fountain pen? Lastly, how do I lever the cannon on the sunken wreck?"

To get the lift to work, chew some gum and stick the button. To get some wood to lever the cannon, fire the missile at the mast. I'd better not give any more of this game away otherwise I'll be in trouble . . .

Continuing with another **FIREBIRD** ***game,*** THE HELM ***this time,*** Dougie Fleming ***asks:***

"How do I kill the griffin?
Where is the gramophone?
What do you do with the drawing that has an adding sign on it?
How do I open the spell book?
Finally, how do I use the flour and the sieve?"

To kill the griffin you will need to make a CMPXQJQF. To use the flour and sieve you must TJGU GMPVS. To find the gramophone you must kill the griffin and type a magic word. A new location will be revealed which contains a gramophone in a wooden box. The plus sign on the picture indecates that you must add together the two numbers you know (only I know that you know only one at the moment!). You will need a key to unlock the book and a XBOE to protect you from the magic.

Richard Martin *of **Chelmsford** is having difficulty getting the amulet from the Druid in* **INTERCEPTOR's** *adventure* WARLORD.

You must DBQUVSF B SPNBO and HJWF IJN UP UIF ESVJE.

Also in WARLORD, Frank Bours *in **Holland** is having difficulty with the fire in the cave.*
For protection XFBS UIF XIJUF DMPBL.

QUESTPROBE 3, FANTASTIC FOUR *is causing problems for* Marcus Williams *of **Hereford** who asks:*

"Please could you tell me how to get Thing out of the tar pit? I have tried every command under the sun but he keeps drowning. I have got to get Thing out to remove the Blob from Doctor Doom's castle."

Just before Thing goes under the tar he should hold his breath. When he stops sinking he should GFFM HSPVOE, TNBTI NBDIJOF, FOUFS NBDIJOF. Torch can now burn the tar.

Amanda Eaton *of **Hextable, Kent** is having difficulty social climbing in* HAMPSTEAD *and writes:*

"I can get a job but cannot get any further. How do I get into the filing cabinet? How do I vote in the boardroom? What is the car for? I can't get anywhere significant in it."

To open the cabinet you should GPSDF DBCJOFU. In the board roon you should vote for PQUJPO 3. The car is needed after you have met Pippa.

ENCRYPTION CORNER
It's easy to speak Brewster!

ENGLISH :	ZABCDEFGHIJKL
BREWSTER:	ABCDEFGHIJKLM
ENGLISH :	MNOPQRSTUVWXY
BREWSTER:	NOPQRSTUVWXYZ

That's all there's time for this month. Keep sending any questions you have as well as any help you have to offer to:

SIGNSTUMPS
PO BOX 10
LUDLOW
SHROPSHIRE
SY8 1DB

SUPERHEROES

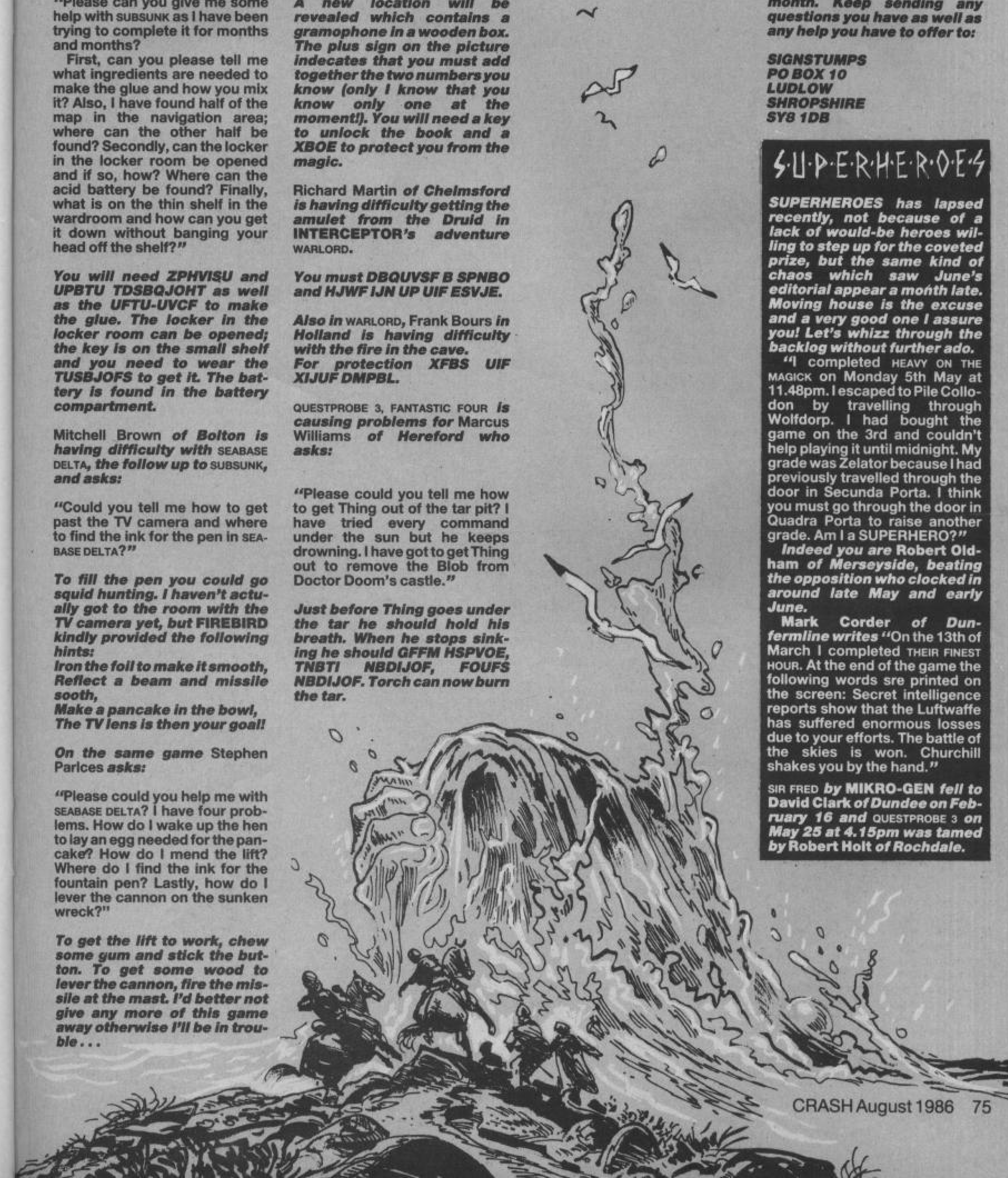
SUPERHEROES has lapsed recently, not because of a lack of would-be heroes willing to step up for the coveted prize, but the same kind of chaos which saw June's editorial appear a month late. Moving house is the excuse and a very good one I assure you! Let's whizz through the backlog without further ado.

"I completed HEAVY ON THE MAGICK on Monday 5th May at 11.48pm. I escaped to Pile Collodon by travelling through Wolfdorp. I had bought the game on the 3rd and couldn't help playing it until midnight. My grade was Zelator because I had previously travelled through the door in Secunda Porta. I think you must go through the door in Quadra Porta to raise another grade. Am I a SUPERHERO?"

Indeed you are* Robert Oldham *of Merseyside, beating the opposition who clocked in around late May and early June.

Mark Corder ***of Dunfermline writes*** "On the 13th of March I completed THEIR FINEST HOUR. At the end of the game the following words sre printed on the screen: Secret intelligence reports show that the Luftwaffe has suffered enormous losses due to your efforts. The battle of the skies is won. Churchill shakes you by the hand."

SIR FRED ***by* MIKRO-GEN *fell to* David Clark *of Dundee on February 16 and*** QUESTPROBE 3 ***on May 25 at 4.15pm was tamed by* Robert Holt *of Rochdale.***



HEAVY ON THE MAGICK

Dear Derek,
Here are some tips on *Heavy on the Magick*.

Locked doors with tables by them need keys. Locked doors with ornate pillars need passwords. For a door with a toll sign by it (ask Apex) a bag of gold is the key (put it on the table). To get past the fire use a salamander charm. To get past the water say 'Water, fall'.

The password to the door on level 2 ('the word is no word') is Door, silence'. The password for the door on Wolfdorp, level 1 (the first one, 'Cry and enter door') is 'Door, wolf'. The password for the next one ('It's madness to enter') is 'Door, lunacy'.

To kill werewolves get the nougat (level 3) and go and swop it for the nugget (level 4). The nugget kills the werewolves on contact. To kill vampires you need the garlic (level 1). To kill slugs you need the pellet (you can get this by dropping a ball in its place).

To open locked doors you generally need a specific key. It is easiest to identify keys by the sign on the wall at the room they are found. All the signs represent the signs of the zodiac. To open the locked door for the room at Flox, use the Aries key. Taurus is for the room at Horns, Gemini for the room at Turo, Virgo for the room at Purity, Scorpio the room at Stings, Sagittarius for the room at Arrows, Capricorn for the one at Nani, Aquarius for the room at Rains, and Pisces for the room at Ichthys.

The cauldron is for resurrecting Ai (no, I don't know either): go and collect the ulna, the thigh and the skull (the skull behind the wraith) and drop them in the cauldron (you'll have to take out the scroll first). Then say, 'Cauldron, achad'.

In one room there is a fire and nothing beyond it. In the fire is a nest. Get the shell (level 1) and swop it for the egg (level 2). Go to the nest (with the salamander charm) and drop the egg in it. Stand well back (to the right-hand side) and say, 'Nest, phoenix'.

To invoke demons put the talisman on the floor as far as possible from a useful exit, stand by the exit and invoke the demon. The talisman for Magot is a sunflower, for Belezbar a mantis, and for Astarot a sword. Astarot sends you to any named area ('Astarot, area'). I'm not sure what the others do. A good idea is to go out and come back in again and then you can invoke them again.

I play with skill as the highest attribute, then stamina, then luck. This way you can kill most regular monsters with a maximum of two blasts and the transfusion spell is more effective. These tips aren't supposed to be complete, as I haven't completed the game, but I hope they are useful.

Simon McGregor, London NW3

MORE MAGICK

Dear Derek,
The ever-thinning line that divides arcade adventures from 'true' adventures has finally been broken with the release of GARGOYLE GAME's *Heavy on the Magick*. It combines the sophistication and text input of an adventure with the animated graphics and realtime action of an arcade game. No-one, be they arcade or adventure player, can possibly disagree that this game is the most exciting new concept in computer games since the likes of *Shadowfire* or *Lords of Midnight*.

After playing it non-stop for a while I am sending you some tips.

Naturally the first thing that you must do is take your Grimoire or spell-book, this will increase your skill a bit and will let you cast the spells BLAST, INVOKE and FREEZE. BLAST is the one for magickly destroying any nasties that get in your way (although most monsters can be avoided by not wasting time or going to pointless places).

When you enter a room with a monster that you wish to kill, just press B (for BLAST) and enter a dozen or so times. When the creature dies, press H (for HALT) and enter to stop the mindless BLASTing. INVOKE calls the demons Magot, Astarot, Asmodee and Belezbar, but as yet I have never found the objects that allow you to call them without being sent to the Furnace (not a nice place)! FREEZE suspends an item/monster so that you can walk past without harm. It won't work on everything, wastes stamina points, and lasts for a very short time so it should be used as a last resort.

Apart from the Grimoire, the most useful thing in the game is your good friend Apex the Ogre. Be careful you do not annoy him by BLASTing or bumping into him as you may well be killed. But, if treated with respect and caution Apex will give you clues that are vital to solving the puzzles. For example, if Axil goes west from the start and follows the only route he soon meets an obstacle; a flowing fountain that he may not pass. He must ask his old friend Apex about it, so after collecting the CALL spell which can be found by going down to level three, eastwards, and then up to level two, he tries CALL APEX. A flash of Magick and Apex explodes from nothingness, ready to be of assistance.

In the terse but adequate language of Magick, Axil tries to get some clues. 'APEX, FOUNTAIN' he says, which roughly translated means 'Apex, please tell me something about this fountain'? 'IT'S WATER' answers Apex simply. Thus guided, Axil tries again: 'APEX, WATER'. 'TALK DOWN TO IT' the wise Apex suggests. Thinks Axil, odd, but it's worth a try. 'WATER, DOWN' he commands. 'WHOOSH WHOOSH' gurgles the water, and ignores him. Hmm, too obvious, thinks Axil. He tries the more cunning 'WATER, FALL' and with a 'trickle' the water recedes back into its fountain. The way is clear! 'APEX, THANKS' says a grateful Axil, and with a quick 'GLAD TO BE OF HELP', Apex disappears as quickly as he came. The way is clear, and Axil has solved his first puzzle!

Anthony Bailey, Surrey

I'm told there should be a map of* HEAVY ON THE MAGICK *in Hannah Smith's Playing Tips this month — check it out!

DB

SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Dear Derek,
For purposes of amusement I have compiled the 'Seven Deadly Sins of Adventure Writing', complete with explanations/examples.

1: THE RANDOM DEATH
Not very common nowadays, but Location Death is, witness *Spellbound*. It might be argued that Random Death adds authenticity to a game, after all, people go down when they're not expecting it in the real world. However, a player might get hit by a meteorite while playing an adventure so the 'realistic' element is already there. There's no need to add to it.

2: ASSASSIN BUG
No, not Edgar. Imagine you're a Hobbit being carried by Thorin when suddenly a Goblin approaches. You slip on the magic ring. . . . or you're standing inside a barrel, and you think, 'I wonder what happens if I try to lift it up while I'm in it?'. Instead of the usual lyrical 'You Can't' it's CRASH . . . The moral: don't try to be adventurous!

3: SINGLE GUESS
During your quest for the *Eye of Bain* you chance upon a desert nomad. You have honey and a dagger, but only one guess as to what to do next. If you get it wrong, he kills you. Fortunately you saved your position but you have to reload after each attempt of GIVE MONEY, OFFER HONEY, KILL NOMAD, USE DAGGER, STAB NOMAD, FIGHT NOMAD before he finally succumbs to THROW DAGGER. Consequently you spend more time on the cassette recorder than on the computer.

4: LUDICROUS SYNONYM
The best example I can think of for this is *Demon Knight*. I had a jewelled knife (not a sacrificial knife). There was a cow in a farmyard and not an altar in sight (or anywhere else in the game). I was unable to KILL, CUT or KNIFE cow. I eventually SACRIFICED it.

A similar problem is sheer absence of meaning. In *The Hobbit*, it is necessary to WAIT, WAIT, E. So what does WAIT mean? Five minutes? Ten minutes? Is *Lord of the Rings* as bad I wonder.

5: SELECT FUNCTION
Sometimes the writer's intentions are manifest: a gun will only work when it's pointed at the person destined to die, or you can swim in one lake but not another. This is quite forgiveable, of course. What did surprise me, however, was this situation: I was at the bottom of a pit. I was unable to use the ladder to climb out, but I WAS able to escape by means of the rope. The ladder, incidentally, had no purpose in the game, *Inca Curse*. Admittedly it's an old game, but that's no excuse.

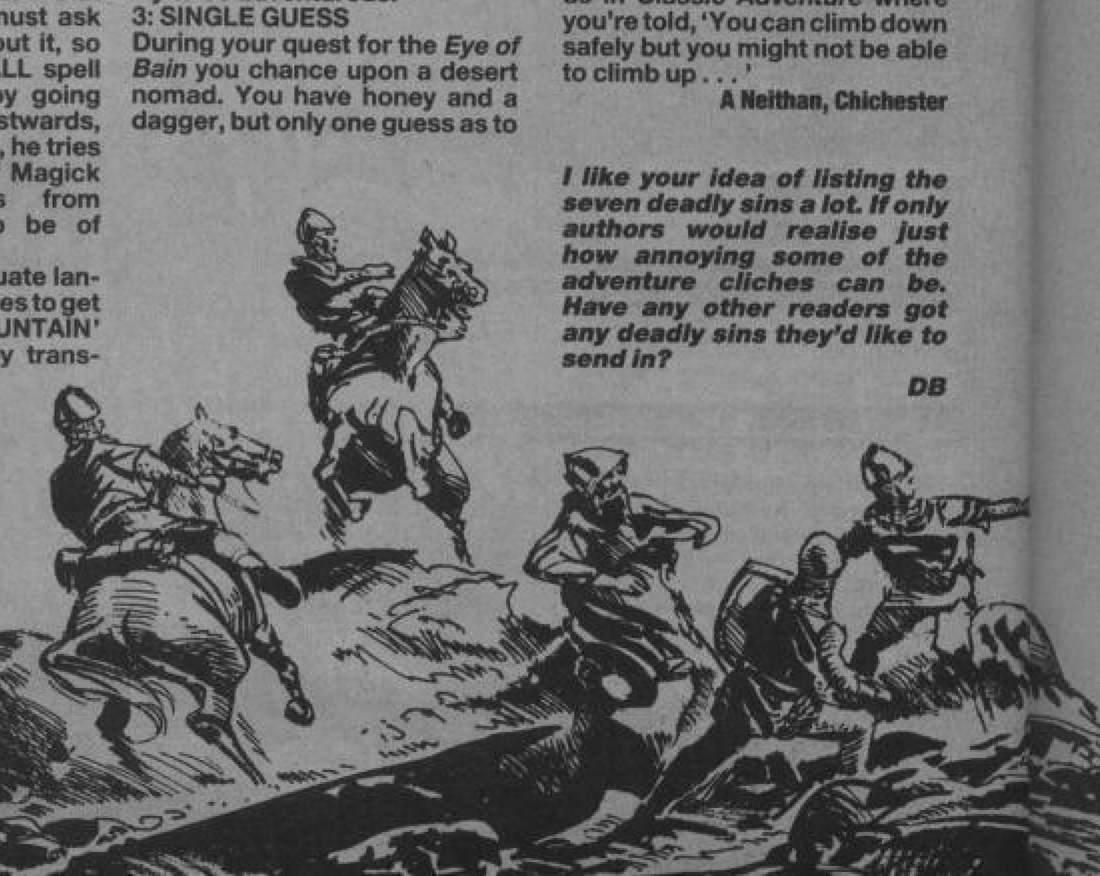
6: NOTHING SPECIAL
You don't expect to be able to examine everything, and it isn't such a crime to get 'You examine the SKIMHJZ. It is nothing special' to the input EXAMINE SKIMHJZ. However, some things require more information. In *The Hobbit* you see a window. Is it open or closed? In *The Helm*, you receive a bulb. Is it a torch bulb? A lupin bulb? You may never know.

7: ONE WAY DOOR
I'm not getting at *Final Mission* where they're justified. But take *Hampstead*. Entering the kitchen is simple, but as for leaving it . . . None of the warnings as in *Classic Adventure* where you're told, 'You can climb down safely but you might not be able to climb up . . .'

A Neithan, Chichester

I like your idea of listing the seven deadly sins a lot. If only authors would realise just how annoying some of the adventure cliches can be. Have any other readers got any deadly sins they'd like to send in?

DB



QUILL ROUTINE

Dear Derek,
Since D Foster and Joel Morris have sent in routines to print out useful bits of text from adventures, I wrote this one. It prints all the text on adventures written using *The Quill*. Type LOAD "" CODE and wait for the OK message then type in this short program and run it. After about a screen of rubbish the text will start to appear. Have fun!

```
10 FOR N = 25000 TO 64000
20 LET Z = 223 — PEEK N + 32
30 IF Z < 32 OR Z > 164 THEN GO TO 50
40 PRINT CHR$ Z ;
50 NEXT N
```

Richard Heywood, Bucks

This is one of many such routines all sent in this month!

DB

TOKEN TOLKIEN

Dear Derek,
I am writing not, surprise surprise, on the well worn subject of Dungeons and Dragons and other role playing games, but on the subject of *Lord of the Rings*. Being addicted to Tolkien's books I rushed out to buy both *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, but I have been disappointed with both games. The games themselves are both very good; *The Hobbit* was definitely the forerunner of today's adventures and has opened the hobby to many computer owners who were arcade freaks but are now adventurers.

To most adventurers the games are good, but to anyone who has read the books more than once and also read various other books by various authors like The Complete Guide to Middle-Earth by Robert Foster, the games fall from being great to being borderline. The reasons for this are the failure to follow the storyline of the book closely enough and the lack of Tolkienesque atmosphere. Whenever I play these games I try to block out the connection with Tolkien or I begin to think the books are bad.

The Hobbit, although not following the book very closely, has somehow got all the atmosphere of the book and is therefore more enjoyable to me. With *Lord of the Rings*, Philip Mitchell has tried too hard in some places and in others he has totally ignored important aspects of the book. He describes Weathertop as a flat-topped mountain and the Black Riders don't go there, which is totally different to the chapter 'Knife in the Dark'. Therefore Frodo is not wounded which would have made the game more realistic because Athelas would have had to be found and there would also be a time limit to reaching Rivendell. Gildor the Elf plays an important part in the Beginners Game but is sadly missing in the game proper. Somehow the atmosphere is lost in the game. There are none of the green rolling hills and fields, cool fir forests and roadside hedges with ripe berries and chirping birds.

In other places, Mr Mitchell has attempted to include some of the history for which Tolkien is so well known but it seems so out of place as it bears no relation to the game eg Kheled-Zaram where Gimli sees the reflection of Dunin's Crown. To players who know the book, this sort of thing is good to see as it proves that Mr Mitchell has read the book closely, but to people who are not Tolkien addicts, they must seem odd as they look significant but are in fact just scenery.

Mr Mitchell had to change the story otherwise the game would be just too easy but he changes the wrong points — Weathertop for instance. It is good that he has kept the crossing of the ford close to the storyline. There are points, however, that totally ruin the game for me. They are the photographs, gramophone, and of course, the bugs! (I won't even mention the so-called graphics).

Climbing down the tree in the Old Forest gives the message, 'You climb down the map'. Killing the Black Riders' horses later shows 'Three Black Riders mounted on three black horses' (which are dead), strange!

Having the poems and songs in the game would be a good idea but it would be pointless to have them in the game itself so why not have them on side two? Donald Swan and Tolkien wrote a book called 'The Road Goes Ever On' with all the songs set to music so it would be a good idea to have these songs on the tape in the next game so it can be played for inspiration!

Finally, because of official licence and all that, a better version of the game can't be written I suspect, so all us Tolkien fans have to just grin and bear it, hoping that part two will be better.

David Bovill, Gwynedd

This month's £20 software prize goes to A Neithan of Chichester for his original letter on the deadly sins of adventuring.





by Rosetta McLeod



USING COMPUTERS IN THE HOME

Quite often I'm asked to speak to groups of adults on the topic of computers in education. Most of the parents in the audiences seem to feel rather at a loss about how to encourage learning in the home situation. We've now reached the stage where a vast number of homes possess a computer of some kind, many of them bought in the hope that they will assist the children with their school work, or help them to cope with life in this high-technology age. Parents, however, are becoming increasingly concerned that the machines tend to be used in the main for game-playing — usually arcade games.

Another worry is that girls seem to show less interest than boys in computers, and this is of particular concern to those parents whose daughters are aiming for a career in a modern office where techniques rely heavily on computers. It's hard to alleviate worries such as these, as there is really no simple answer.

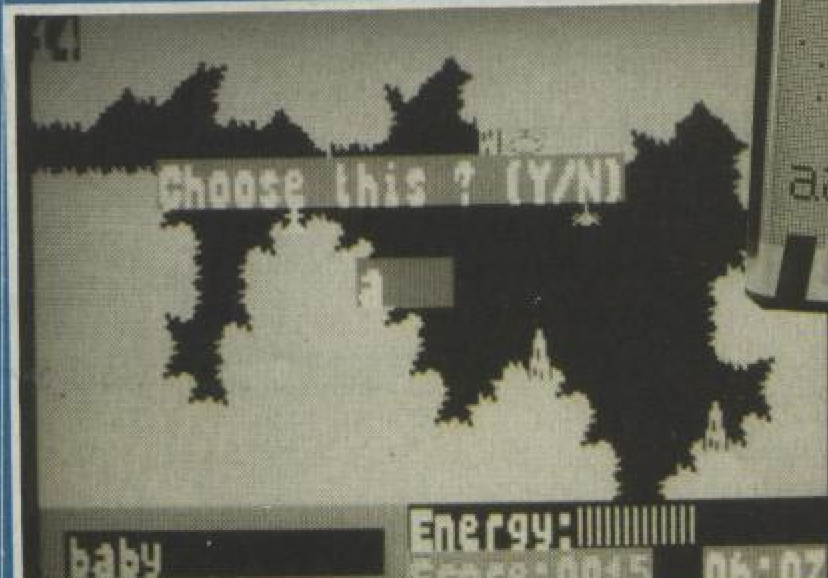
Young children often enjoy a large amount of parental support when it comes to using computers, and some of the early learning games reviewed this month are certainly of the type to encourage parent/child involvement. Older children, however, tend not to be given this kind of support, being left very much to their own devices. Programs like Special Agent **and** Car Journey **are helpful in letting parents see the sort of related activities their children can be directed towards.**

Instead of taking a back seat, the adults may even be encouraged to work with their teenagers on the games. Certainly all children ought to have the chance to develop keyboard skills at least, and this means moving away from arcade games and joysticks. I do wish, though, there were more programs designed to appeal to girls — publishers please note!

THE VOWELS OF THE EARTH PART ONE — QUEST FOR A

Producer: IEC Software
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Age range: **children over 7 years, especially those with poor spelling or dyslexic problems.**





Quest for A is the latest in IEC SOFTWARE's series of programs specifically aimed at children with learning difficulties. The program takes the form of an arcade-type game, with the player in search of a bag of gold. A rolling globe has to be moved through a network of caves as quickly as possible until you find the correct spelling to complete a word. All the words use the 'A' sound, and the child has to choose from ai, ei, ey, ay and so on.

There are several levels of difficulty to select from, and these build up to the completion of words such as 'ancient', 'neighed', 'investigation' and 'beige'. On the second side of the tape a homophones program encourages the child has to distinguish between the spellings of words which sound the same but have different meanings such as plain and plane, veil and vale. Both programs can be played with a joystick, using cursor control, or using specified keys, and it is also possible to select the length of time needed for the game. A fair amount of manual dexterity is required to move the globe without touching the walls of the cave — if this happens the energy score displayed at the bottom of the screen is reduced.

Designed by educational psychologist, **Jo Westwood**, this is a game which will hold children's attention and improve their spelling skills without them being aware of it. The colourful and attractive screen displays add to the appeal of the game, and the children I tried it out on were keen to do well.

COMMENTS

Control keys: choose from Kempston or Sinclair joystick, cursor control, or keys V, B, I, J & 9
Keyboard play: very responsive
Graphics: very attractive
Use of colour: good
General rating: an extremely useful and professional game which would be of benefit to any child with a spelling problem.



FIRST STEPS WITH THE MR MEN

Producer: Mirrorsoft
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Age range: **4 — 8 years**

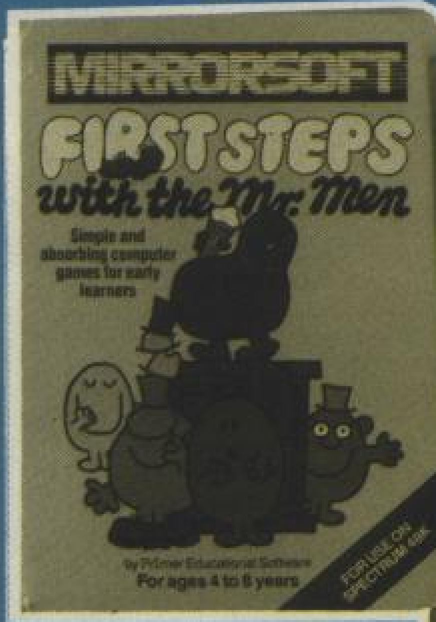
Young children fond of **Roger Hargreaves'** *Mr Men* characters will love the four programs in this package. The colourful booklet which accompanies the software tells the story of each game and explains what to do. *Mr Greedy's Ice-cream Hunt* helps the child with the concept of direction as *Mr Greedy* is moved round five carefully graded screens in search of ice-creams, while *Mr Silly's Hat Game* was specially written to develop left/right scanning in preparation for learning to read.

Shape recognition is covered in *Mr Forgetful's Wardrobe Game* where the child has to match up pairs of familiar objects such as shoes and socks, and the last game, *Mr Forgetful's Letter Game* extends this to letter recognition when a random selection of letters of the alphabet takes the place of the objects. This game also gives the adult the option of entering a chosen range of letters to suit the needs of the individual child.

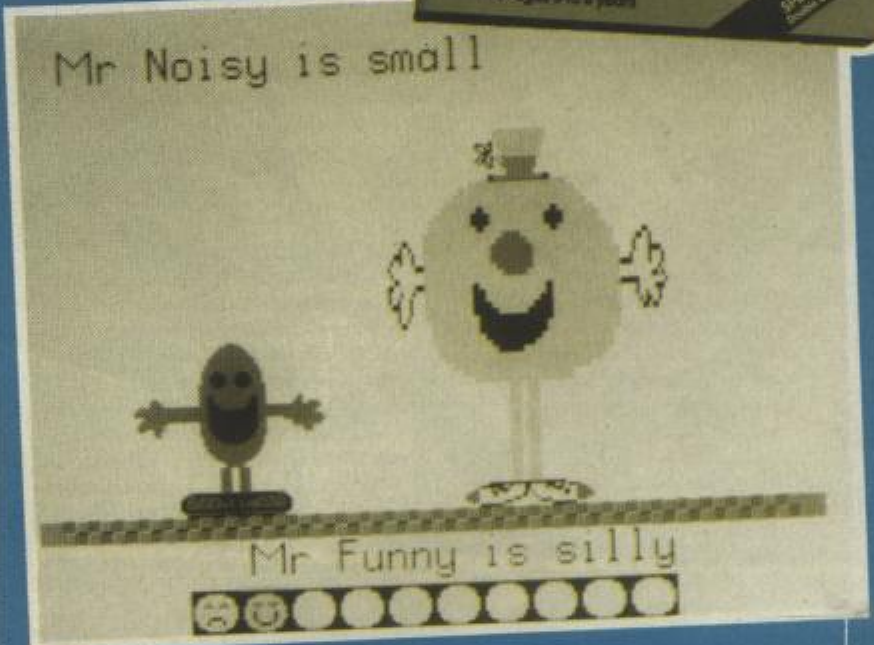
The games are extremely easy for even the youngest child to operate as a colour-coded overlay featuring *Mr Clever* is supplied. This sits over the keys 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 0. Unfortunately it is very easy for a child to press BREAK inadvertently if a Spectrum Plus is used, and this crashes the program.

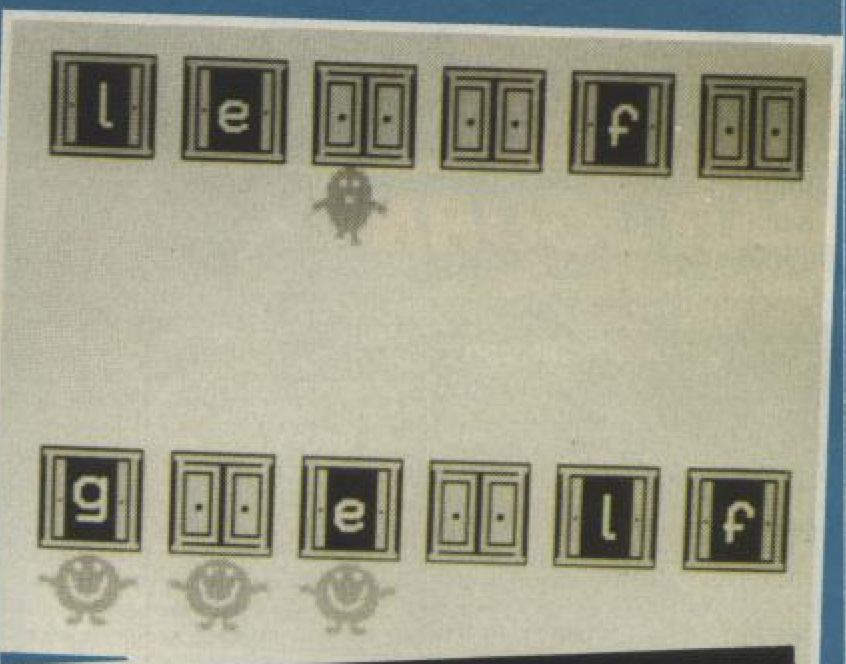
COMMENTS

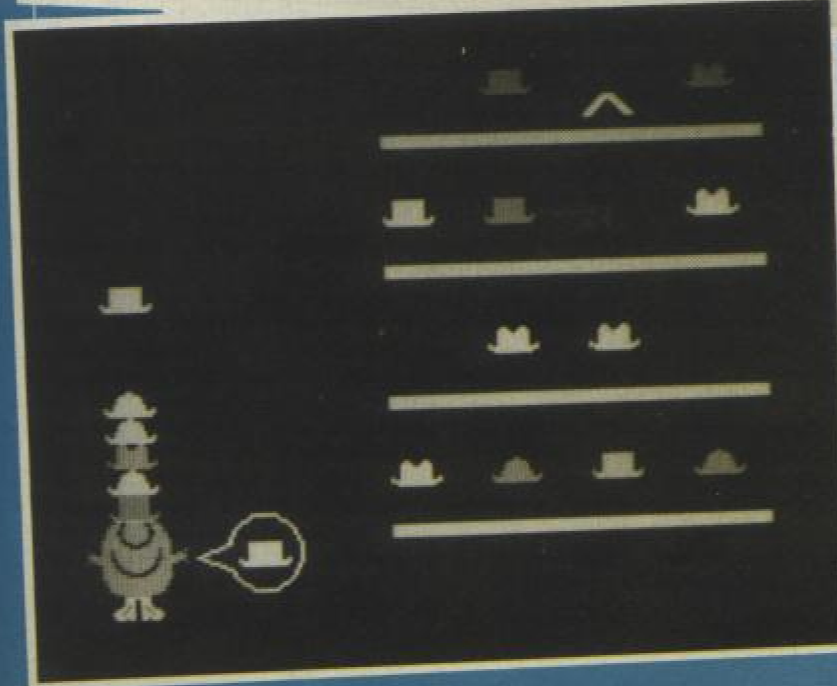
Control keys: a colour-coded overlay sitting on top of six number keys makes the commands easy to input
Keyboard play: very fast
Graphics: clear and appealing for the young child
Use of colour: eye-catching
General rating: although aimed at children from 4 to 8, I would lower the age range. For most 7 and 8 year olds, the stories and games would be too simple, so perhaps 2 to 6 years would be more realistic.











WORD GAMES WITH THE MR MEN

Producer: Mirrorsoft
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Age range: **5 — 8 years**

This two cassette pack contains *Mr Noisy's Word Game* for children learning to read, and *Read With Mr Bounce* for more advanced readers. The first game helps the child to understand three sorts of words which sometimes cause confusion — opposites, comparatives and superlatives. There are nine short games in this section, the first four introducing words such as tall/short, high/low, wide/narrow and fat/thin, while the next two give practice in turning these adjectives into their comparative and superlative forms. The final three games provide an opportunity to practise all the skills learned.

In all the games, words are large and easy to read and the graphics are most attractive. *Read With Mr Bounce* extends the skills already covered and introduces the understanding of words such as in, on, outside — the animated graphics show the meaning of each concept in a very clear way before giving the child the option of typing in the word which shows where *Mr Bounce* is. For this, a plastic overlay is supplied, displaying the letter keys in their lower case form. The overlay is fine for the ordinary Spectrum but useless for the Plus.

Both *Mr Noisy's Word Game* and *Read With Mr Bounce* give the child the chance to obtain a printout, and the glossy booklet contains details on how to play the games together with colourful pictures of the characters.

COMMENTS

Control keys: ENTER, 1 and 0 for the easier games, letter keys for the more complex ones
Keyboard play: very responsive
Graphics: excellent
Use of colour: very good indeed
General rating: an enjoyable and entertaining package of games, though again I would lower the age range as all the 8 year olds I know have outgrown the *Mr Men*!



SPECIAL AGENT

Producer: Hill MacGibbon
Retail price: £9.95
Age range: older children

Special Agent is a program in the *Games to Stretch the Mind* series, and was designed by **FIVE WAYS**, well-known for quality educational software. The player assumes the role of a special agent for M16 based in London, and the mission is to catch a devious enemy spy on the loose in Europe.

The player has to travel by air and rail to a variety of destinations, making the most of all the clues and intelligence reports that flash on the screen. The city from which a report is sent is highlighted — but if the enemy has eliminated your agent in a city, no report can be received! An informer's report can also be purchased for the sum of £100, and the record of your total costs is displayed at the top left hand corner of the map, together with a clock which records the passage of time.

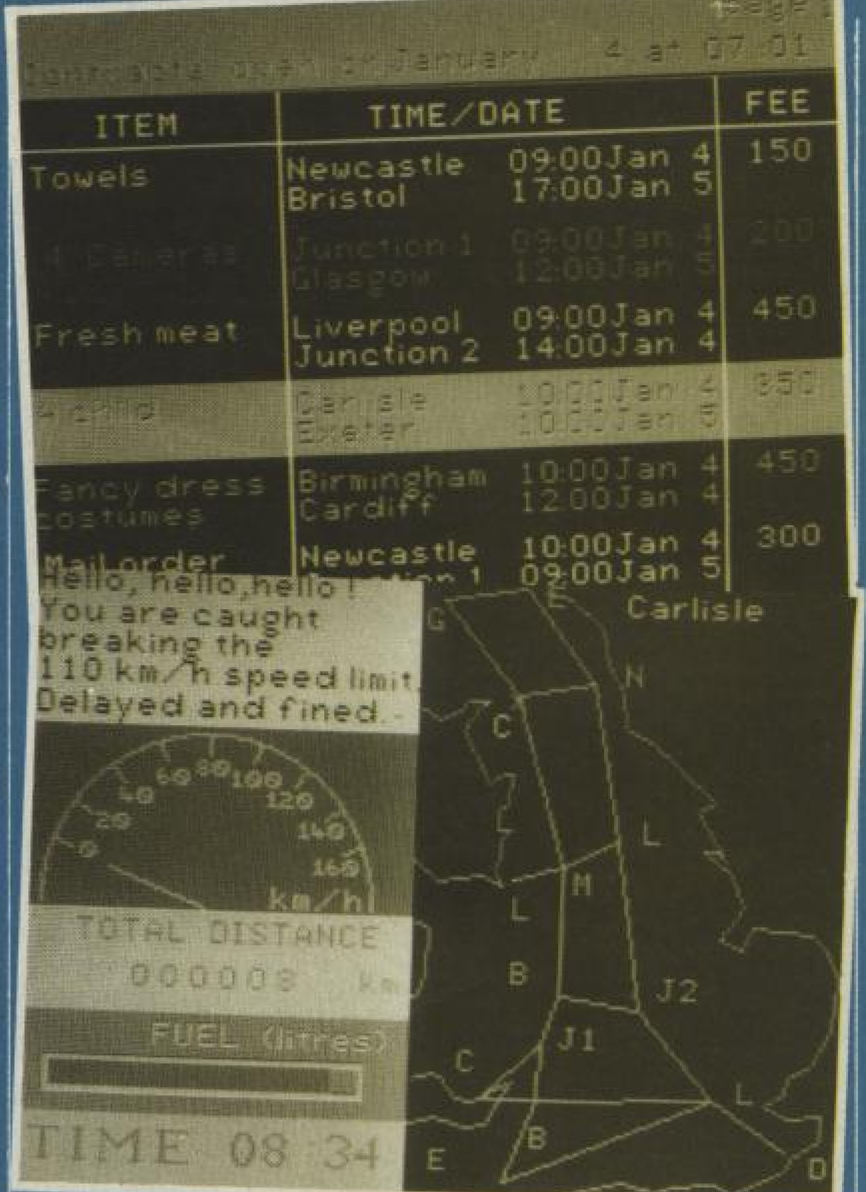
Sometimes, reports are received in code and the player has to choose the cipher option for clues on how to decode it or pay £100 for help from the back-room boffins in London. Money may also be spent in hiring new agents to replace those eliminated, and on making journeys.

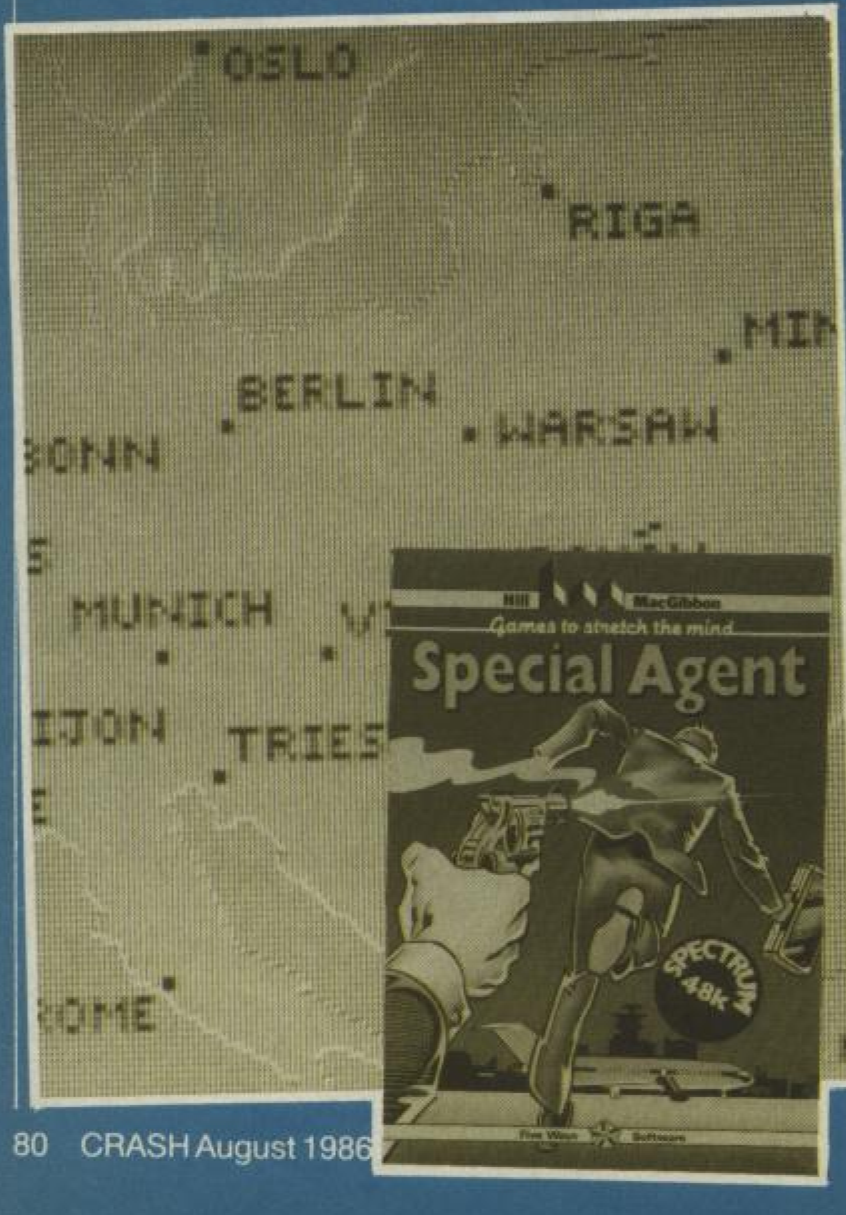
The educational possibilities of this game are immense. Learning about the map of Europe, reading timetables and solving codes are only a few of the skills involved. Intelligence reports such as, 'Spy reported in the capital of Turkey' may require a bit of research before the name of the actual city is discovered. The package also contains an attractive illustrated booklet with information about spies and agents such as Mata Hari, Burgess and McLean, and the fictional Sir Percy Blakeney; brief descriptions on some of the major European cities; maps showing population and land use; and details regarding the contents of a spy kit — bugging devices, microdots and so on.

This is an extremely well thought-out package which will hold a child's attention and make learning fun. A particularly useful feature is the facility for pausing the game to allow time for thought. Great care has been taken to ensure ease of operation.

COMMENTS

Control keys: an overlay is supplied for the top row of keys
Keyboard play: good
Graphics: very clear
Use of colour: bright and attractive
General rating: an absorbing game full of learning opportunities. For the price, this package represents excellent value.





CAR JOURNEY

Producer: Hill MacGibbon
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Age range: **older children**

In the same series as *Special Agent*, *Car Journey* involves decision-making and skills of calculating time, distance and money. The program has 4 levels: levels 1 and 2 involve driving a car around the country with or without road hazards, while levels 3 and 4 are based on running a delivery service, again with or without the road hazards.

On all levels you have to choose from which town the journey is to begin, and then select the vehicle you are going to drive. The smaller vehicles travel faster and cost less to hire for the day (when you are playing Delivery Service), and of course each has a fuel tank with a different capacity. A histogram displays the fuel consumption at various speeds, and you have to fill up with petrol before the journey can commence.

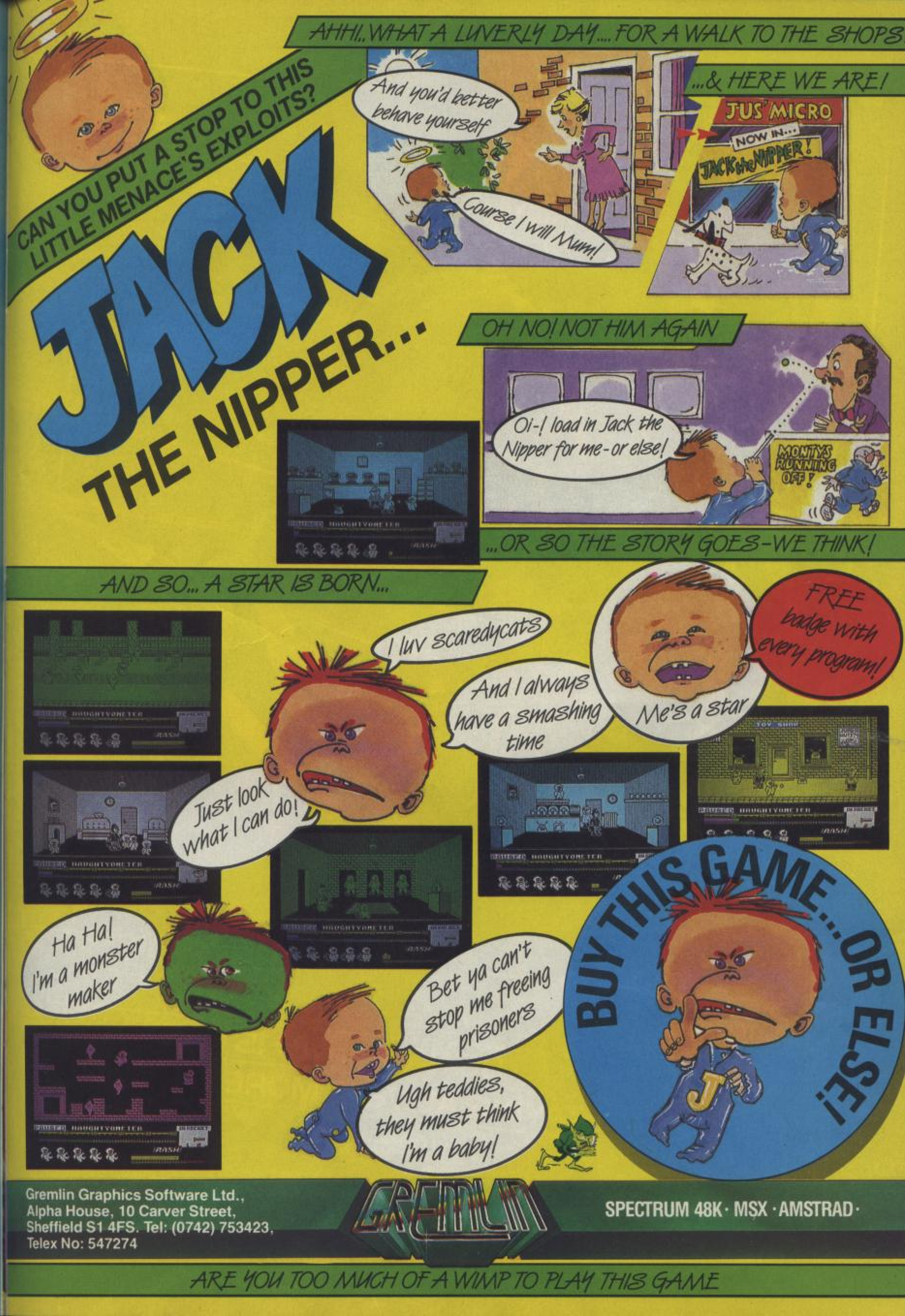
On levels 3 and 4 a progress chart can be shown on the screen and this registers the cost of the fuel purchased. An overlay placed on the top row of keys allows the player call up status information and also contains the commands for driving the vehicle chosen.

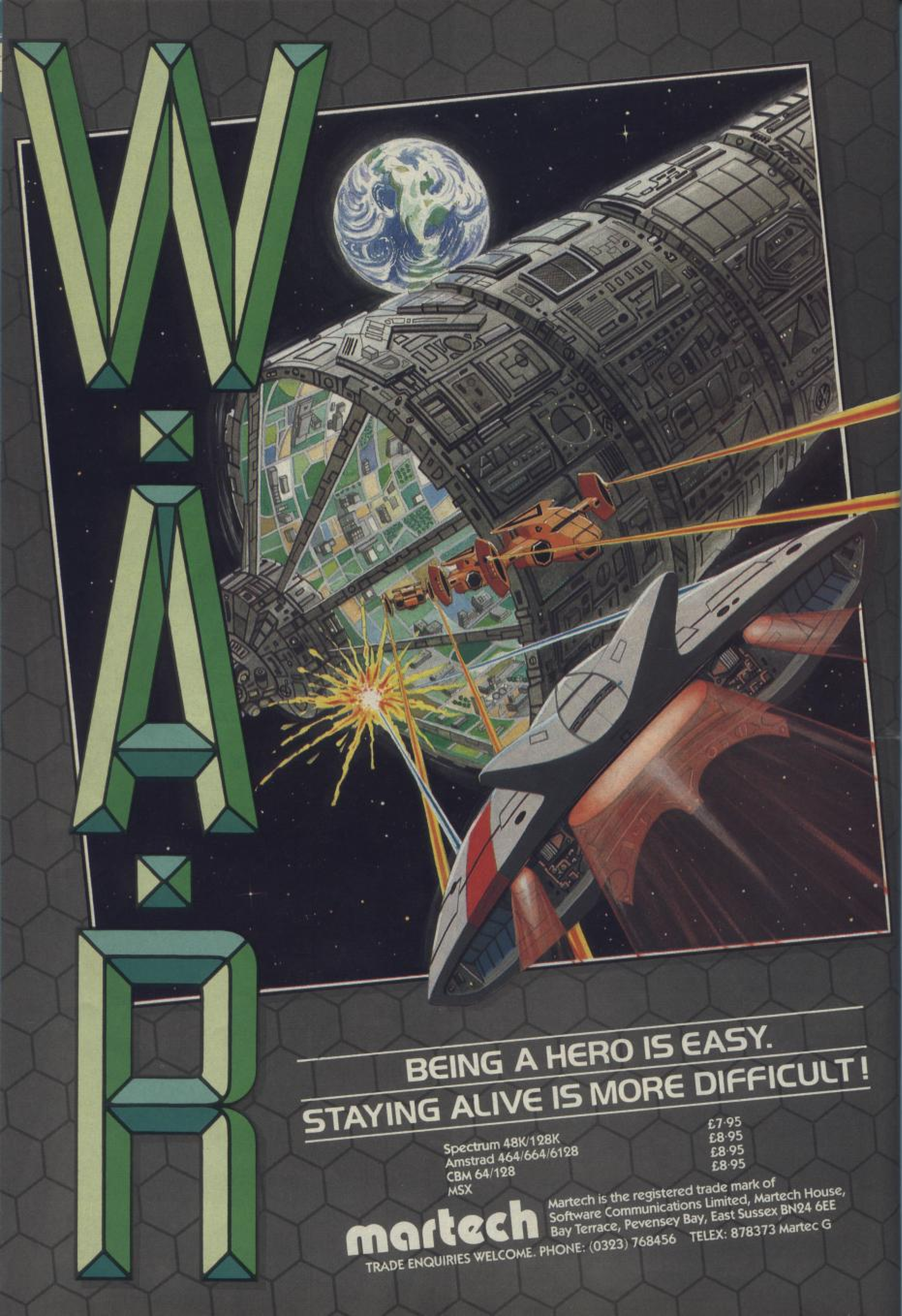
The Delivery Service games are quite complex as there are so many factors to be borne in mind. The fee for delivering some contracts, for instance, is larger than for others, though the more valuable contracts have to be delivered very quickly. Journeys have to be planned carefully, and petrol can be saved by carrying more than one load at a time. An additional problem is that whenever the clock reaches 19.00 hours, you must stop for the night and this incurs overnight costs unless you are in your home town. Penalties also have to be paid if the vehicle is overloaded or if a load is not delivered in time.

The accompanying booklet gives information about the history of roads and how a car works, as well as containing the extract from *The Wind in the Willows* where Toad becomes car-crazy.

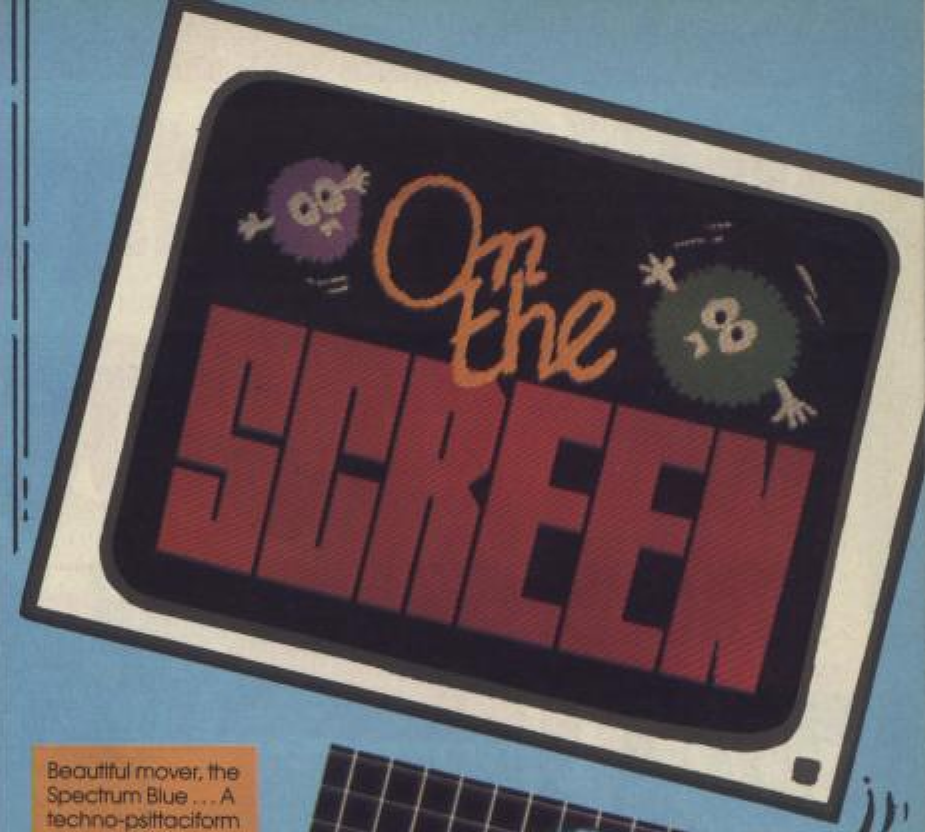
COMMENTS

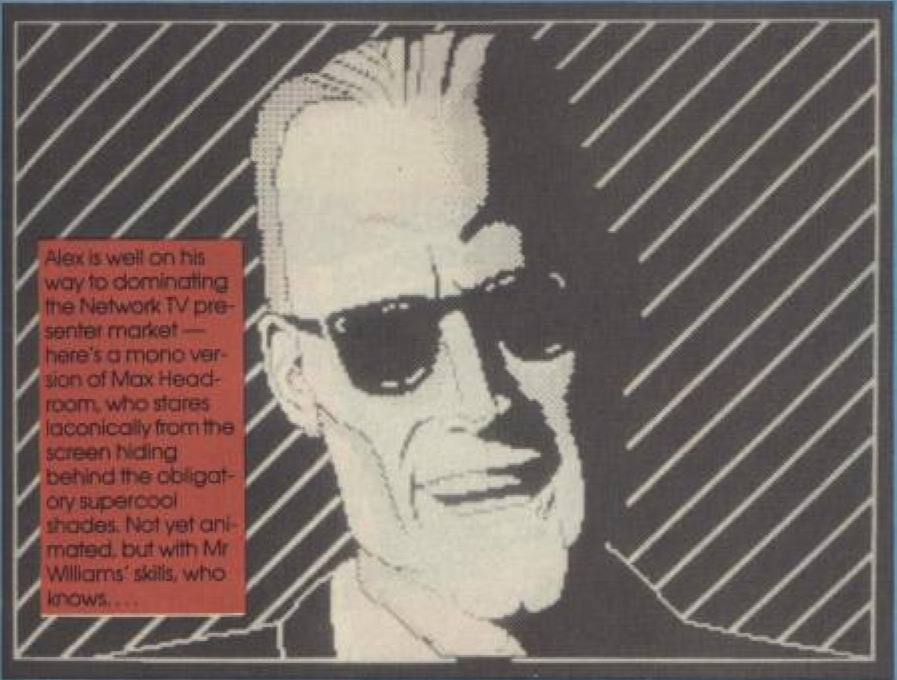
Control keys: a keyboard overlay ensures ease of operation
Keyboard play: responsive
Graphics: an attractive and sensible screen display
Use of colour: effective
General rating: this is a useful program for developing quite complex skills in an enjoyable way.


CAN YOU PUT A STOP TO THIS LITTLE MENACE'S EXPLOITS?
JACK THE NIPPER...
AHH!..WHAT A LUVERLY DAY.... FOR A WALK TO THE SHOPS
And you'd better behave yourself
Course I will Mum!
...& HERE WE ARE!
JUS' MICRO
NOW IN...
JACK the NIPPER!
OH NO! NOT HIM AGAIN
Oi-! load in Jack the Nipper for me - or else!
MONTYS RUNNING OFF!
...OR SO THE STORY GOES-WE THINK!
AND SO... A STAR IS BORN...
I luv scaredycats
And I always have a smashing time
Me's a star
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Just look what I can do!
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After last month's pot pourri of cartoon characters, the SCREEN$ Gallery returns with a one-man exhibition from Alex Williams, a Cornish lad who beavers away in Truro, creating masterpieces on his Spectrum screen. Apart from 'straightforward' pictures, Alex specialises in animations and sent in a rather nifty implementation of the parrot which appears in the Max Headroom film . . . We've included two shots of the Spectrum Blue here, but the realtime animation has to be seen to be believed!



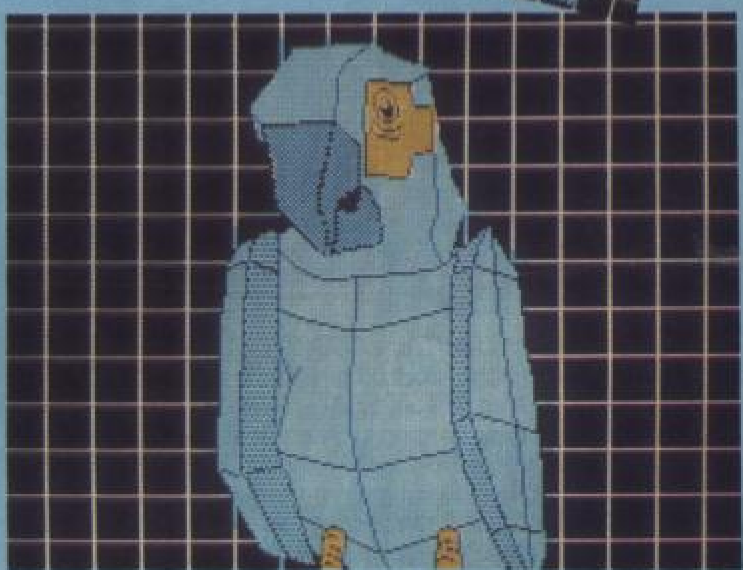


Alex is well on his way to dominating the Network TV presenter market — here's a mono version of Max Headroom, who stares laconically from the screen hiding behind the obligatory supercool shades. Not yet animated, but with Mr Williams' skills, who knows. . . .

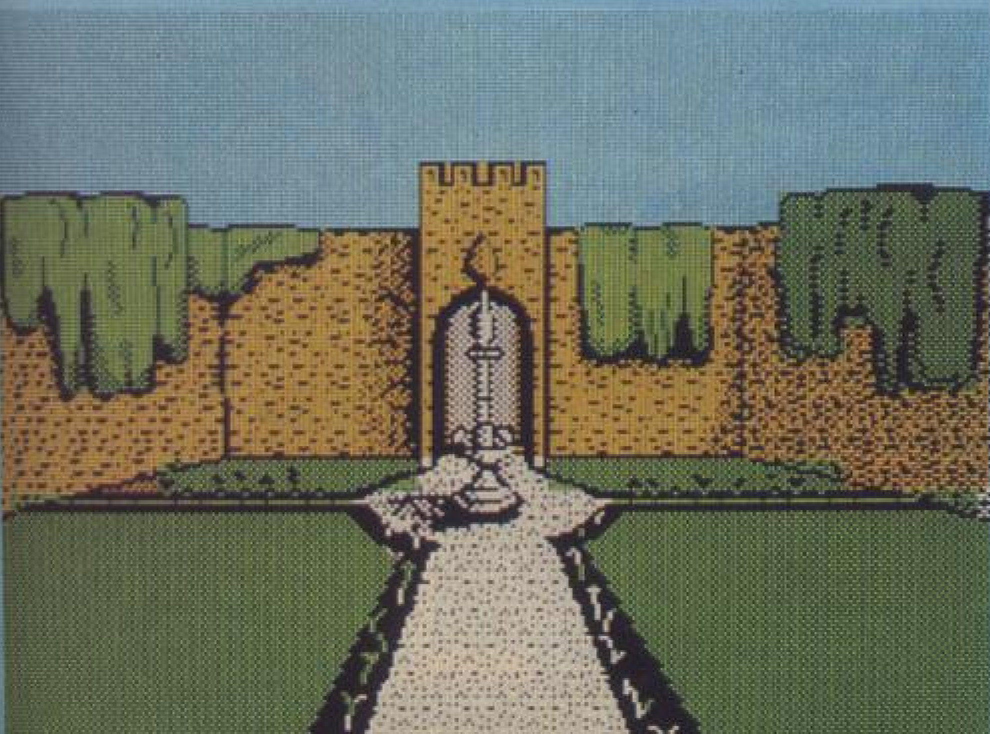


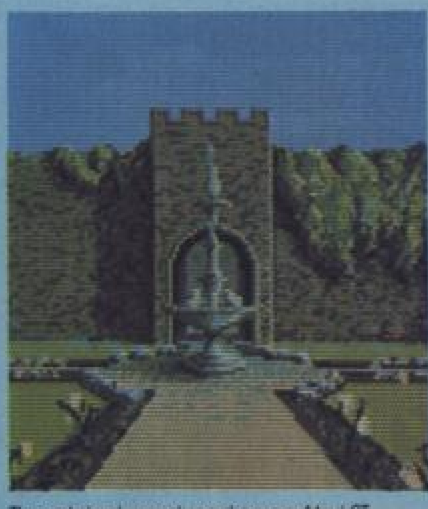
A aura of cynical surprise dominates the countenance of Jack Lemmon — maybe it is the shock of being encapsulated on the screen of a Spectrum rather than the more familiar movie house screen that lends Alex Williams' rendition of Jack Lemmon the air of surprise.





Beautiful mover, the Spectrum Blue . . . A techno-psittaciform brought to life on the computer screen in a masterly piece of animation in the school of Bryce. Today the parrot, tomorrow Max himself? Two frames from the sequence created by Alex Williams.





The original, produced on an Atari ST

Not a man to be phased by the wondrous graphics capabilities of large and powerful computers, is our Alex. As soon as he cast eyes upon the snap from THE PAWN in the RAINBIRD Kart Comp spread back in the April issue, Alex scampered off to his Spectrum, put it into Atari ST mode and came up with this delightful rendition of one of the location graphics in Rainbird's whizzo adventure. Doubtful if they'll manage to get the rest of the game onto the Spectrum . . .

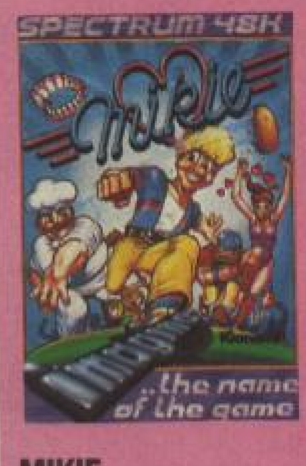
NEVER, IN THE FIELD OF M
HAS SO MUCH BEEN DONE F

LIST A — SINGLE FREEBIES



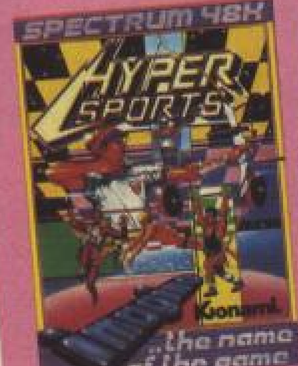
MOVIE

Another SMASH for IMAGINE, this time an original game from a Hungarian programmer which collected 93% overall in Issue 26. You take on the role of a private detective investigating gangland crime, and as you progress through the 3D locations in the game you meet up with heavies, gunfire, gangsters molls and more than a little mystery and intruige. Brings out the Shamus in you!



MIKIE

A CRASH Smash in Issue 25 earlier this year, collecting 93%, this IMAGINE game features a smashing title tune and has all the thrills and spills of the arcade original. Take on the role of a love-lorn teenager battling to be reunited with his sweetheart. Pestered by all manner of violent school staff, including garrulous janitors, crazed cooks and power-crazed teachers, Mikie has to get to the playground where his lady love awaits.



HYPER SPORTS

Another Konami arcade conversion carefully executed by IMAGINE. Six events to compete in: Swimming; Skeet Shooting; Long Horse; Archery; Triple Jump and Weight Lifting. Can you take the challenge? SMASHed in the legendary issue 19, collecting a mark of 92% overall.



PING PONG

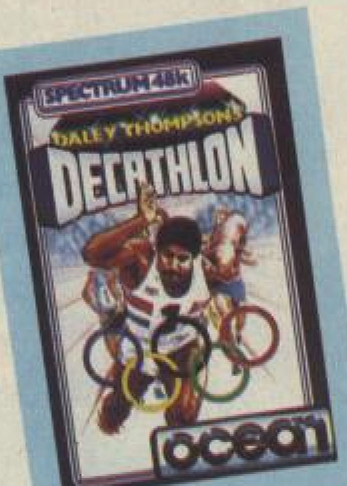
Wimbledon's over for another year but that's Lawn Tennis. This is Table Tennis, and a SMASHing game it is too — collecting 90 points overall in Issue 28. All the fun of the arcade original as you battle it out over the green table: you against the computer or challenge a friend!

LIST B — DOUBLE FREEBIES



FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

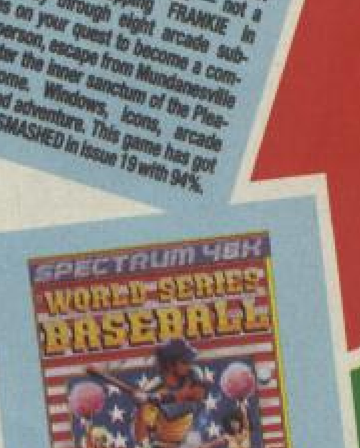
A stunning game produced for OCEAN by the Denton Design team. One of the most imaginative name tie-ins yet — not a single platform-hopping FRANKIE in sight! Play through eight arcade sub-games on your quest to become a complete person, escape from Mundanesville and enter the inner sanctum of the Pleasure Dome. Windows, icons, arcade action and adventure. This game has got the lot — SMASHED in issue 19 with 94%.



DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON



RAMBO



WORLD SERIES BASEBALL

One of America's national sports is captured on the Spectrum Screen by the IMAGINE team. Full 3D graphics of the whole field are supplemented by a close up screen which details the action. Overall, more fun to play with a friend than with the computer — head-to-head play brings out the very best in this game which was awarded SMASH status in Issue 16 with 91%.

The Dynamic Duo from CRASH Mail Order, Auntie Aggie and Guru Denise have worked overtime again this month, recharging the power of the MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER so that it may bring lucky owners even more goodies.

Those of you who already own a MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER (the magic talisman stored on Guru Denise's Subscription computer that makes sure you receive a monthly copy of CRASH) should receive a freebie THEATRE EUROPE poster with this issue of the magazine. The JOURNAL OF MYSTICAL AFFAIRS, also circulated free to owners of MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBERS is packed with goodies too, including an offer which allows NUMBER holders to save £3.00 on the normal price of PSS's latest release THEATRE EUROPE AND collect a £3.00 voucher from PSS at the same time!

INCENTIVE's GRAPHIC ADVENTURE CREATOR has just hit the streets at the retail price of £22.95. Look out for the HOLY TEAR OFF COUPON in the JOURNAL that allows would-be adventure writers to save more money! And of course there's a special competition for JOURNAL readers to get to grips with. . . . Once again, there's a selection of tempting goodies on offer this month which may encourage you to get hold of a personalised MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER. Lets face it, can you afford to be without one?

The complete works of MARTECH were made available to Guru Denise this month, and after casting a rune or two, her Subscription computer printed out the MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER 210052 owned by a G Forsyth in Falkirk, Scotland. Fortune smiles upon G Forsythe this month — it could smile on you next month, who knows?

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS, FOR SO MANY BY SO FEW

TIME TO JOIN THE ELITE BAND OF MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER OWNERS?

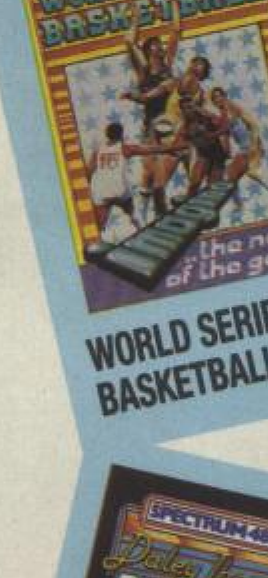
Should you wish to partake of the benefits of MYSTERY SUBSCRIBER NUMBER ownership, this month is another good month to take the plunge and send some loot to Guru Denise. The power generated by the MYSTICAL NUMBERS on Guru D's computer has combined to offer a truly massive selection of OCEAN and IMAGINE games from which you can choose if you desire to start a MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER working for you this month.

People applying to Guru Denise for a MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER can opt to receive one free game from LIST A or two free games from LIST B. Plenty of choice this month, eh folks? Make your selection, find a postal order or cheque for the appropriate amount, make it payable to "Newsfield Ltd" and whizz it off to Guru Denise with the completed application form and she'll do her best to get things moving for you. Don't expect your choice of free games to come with your copy of CRASH — Auntie Aggie has to seal them lovingly in their very own Jiffy Bag and send them separately, 'cos they won't fit inside the plastic sleeve used to send out monthly installments of the Softwareology Course that comes cunningly disguised as a copy of CRASH.

Be patient, be vigilant, be pure!



N.O.M.A.D.



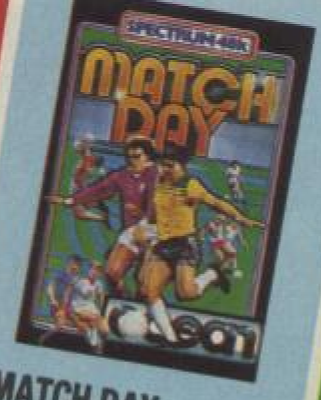
WORLD SERIES BASKETBALL

No Harmful Fumes!



COSMIC WARTOAD

Travel through the vortex and rescue your princess from the clutches of evil monsters. If you don't get to her on time, the foul Sludge Saw will tear her apart. Travelling through the void, a Cosmic Toolkit has to be assembled and wave upon wave of alien nasty destroyed in sub-games which cycle round. A Denton Designs game for OCEAN which was awarded 88% overall in Issue 26.



MATCH DAY

The classic football simulation which has yet to be bettered on the Spectrum in the eyes of many football freaks. Way back in Issue 13 we gave it 86% overall, and an argument has raged ever since with fans of this OCEAN game insisting it should have been a SMASH. Anyone remotely interested in football and sports simulations should make sure they have a copy of this excellent game in which the on-pitch action takes place on a scrolling pitch.



DALEY THOMPSON'S SUPERTEST

FORM TO BE USED WHEN APPLYING FOR A MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER

I can't resist the temptation, Guru D. I've filled in every detail on this form and now I'm whizzing it to you with a cheque/postal order for £15.00 made payable to Newsfield Ltd because I live in the UK (£22.00 if I am a European resident).

Having chosen either one game from LIST A or two games from LIST B I would like the power of my MYSTICAL NUMBER to begin sending me copies of CRASH with Issue number ....

You'll do your best to get my choice of freebie software to me via Auntie Aggiepost, but I understand it won't arrive in the same envelope as my first copy of CRASH.

SEND NICE THINGS THROUGH THE POST TO ME:

I am called

....

AND I LIVE AT

....

....

....

....

POST CODE ....

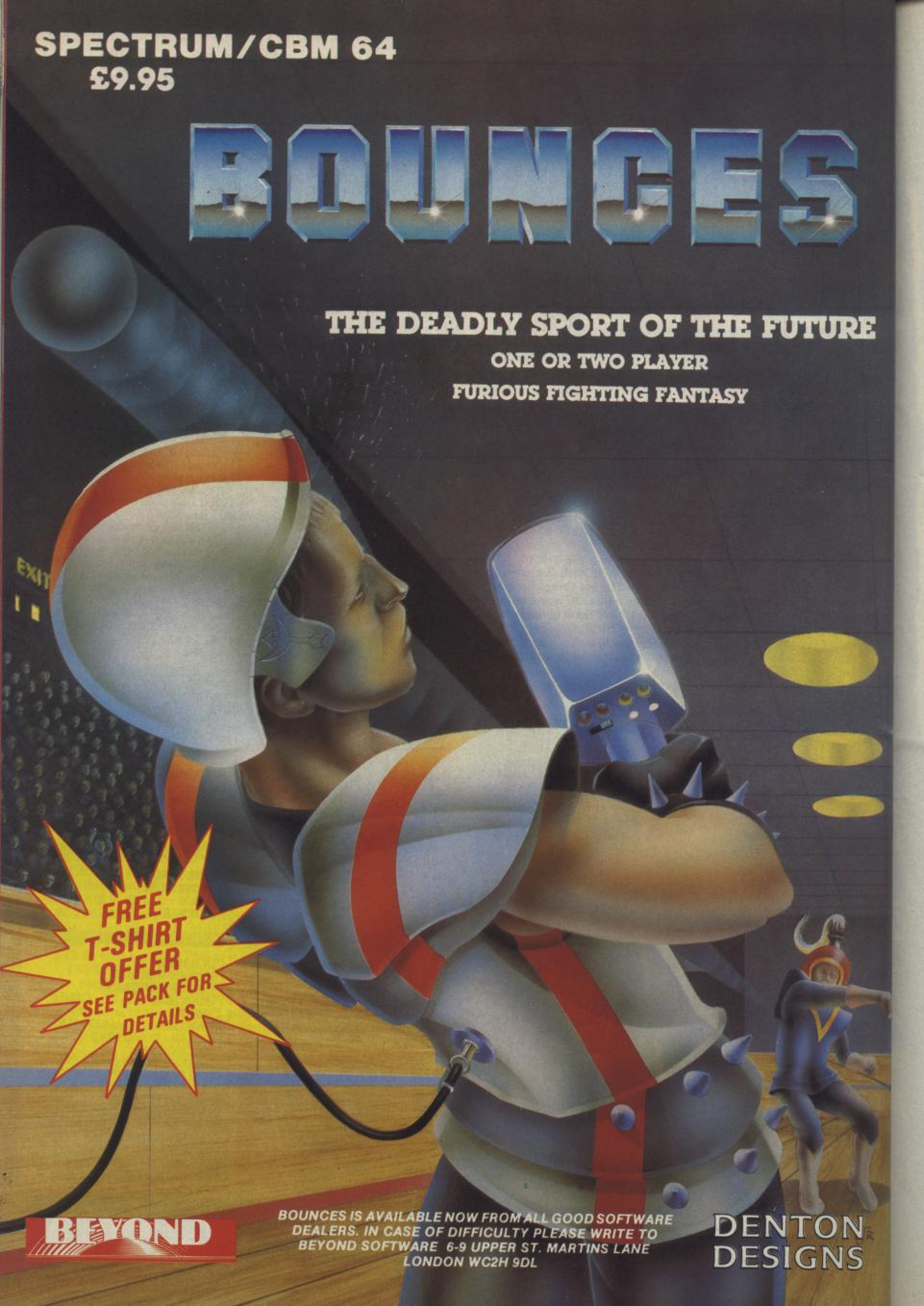
TICK ONE

- ☐ PING PONG
- ☐ HYPERSPORTS
- ☐ MIKIE
- ☐ M.O.V.I.E.

OR TICK TWO

- ☐ N.O.M.A.D.
- ☐ COSMIC WARTOAD
- ☐ WORLD SERIES BASEBALL
- ☐ MATCHDAY
- ☐ RAMBO
- ☐ WORLD SERIES BASKETBALL
- ☐ DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON
- ☐ FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD
- ☐ DALEY THOMPSON'S SUPERTEST

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DESIGNS



ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME
PRESENTS
JETMAN
JOHN RICHARDSON
OUR HERO, THE V. SILLY JETMAN HAS FOUND A SPACE MINE WHICH HE THINKS IS A GIANT CONKER AND HE HAS FOOLISHLY ('COS THAT'S WHERE HIS ACT IS AT) CHALLENGED PARROTMAN TO A GAME OF KILLER CONKERS.... LOOSER GETS KILT.... HO!
STAN' BACK!
REF! REF! STANLEY BACK IS GOIN' BLOW US ALL UP IF YOU DON'T 'SQUALIFY IT...
CHIRP!
I THINK I'M GONNA...
GOSH!
ONE TO GET READY...
TWO TO GET STEADY...
SQUAWK
I THINK I'M GONNA GO...
POO!
CHICKEN!
BUNG
BUNG...?
EEE!
GO...
FFVVVVVOOOOMM
WHHHIZZZZZ
FLICKO
ZZZZOOOOO
LOOK! LOOK! LOOKIT!
I WIN!
ME
HIM LOST!
I WIN!
LOOK
POLLY WANNA CRACKER!
YO?
WOW!
ME WIN!
CHIRP!
SQUAAK!
I WIN!
ME!
BUT I'M NOT PROGRAMMED TO GO 'BUNG'!
POOTUT UMGEE KWALUM AK DIMBO DINGOOLEE AK POOTUT TUPU UM BOOBAT LOONY POO WABBY UM DOODAH!
GOORAP!
TOO RIGHT!
OUW!
THE PARROT WINS!
OO'S A PRETTY BOY THEN!
CHIRP!
FEE FIE FOE UMPARP CHEATO CONKER BAZZAZ...
I'M ONLY PROGRAMMED...
FIRST YOUR CONKER...
YAY YAY
AB.
AB... ABLAB BABLAB BAB
EEDY BEEDY BIDEE LOONIUM BAZZAZ!
...TO GO...
REF.
...THEN YOU!
KA-BLAMO!
?
AIEEE
SHOCK HORROR
OW!
THERE Y'GO, STANLEY BWAH! I SURE AIN'T GOIN' MESS WID YOU IF'N YOU IS GOIN' TAKE IT THAT SERIOUS... THE CUP'S YOURS, BOY...
...AN' SO IS THE MAIN PRIZE... LONG LIVE STANLEY THE CONKERER...
...I THINK!
OUHH...
THUD
COR! OUR HERO DONE WON A WHOLE PLANET..!! EEE... HICK... WOW!

REAL JEWELS ON OFFER FROM RAINBIRD

H SAMUEL vouchers up for grabs in the

Jewels of Darkness

COMP!

Those masters of Adventure, LEVEL 9, whose base is in sunny Weston-super-Mare, have teamed up with RAINBIRD to launch a range of stunning new products onto an unsuspecting public. Tony Rainbird and his team will be concentrating on the marketing and sales side of things, leaving the Austin family to beaver away in their woodland retreat that nestles in the Mendips, writing more devious adventure games.

Anyway, to start off their new partnership RAINBIRD is releasing a compilation called of LEVEL 9 classics, called *Jewels of Darkness* — a trio of well-respected adventures: *Colossal Adventure*, *Adventure Quest* and *Dungeon Adventure* which is to be sold for £14.95. The games come on three cassettes, together with a small book and a full colour poster.

The software has been fully revamped and upgraded since the original release of the titles, and now features the LEVEL 9 language parser which can cope with multiple commands and a vocabulary of 1,000 words. Each game contains 200 graphic locations to give your eyes a treat while your brain is working overtime trying to work out all the puzzles.

And while we're on the subject of jewellery (tenuous link number 37) it has suddenly dawned on me that the CRASH office is sadly lagging behind in the Make Yourself Pretty For Summer race that has overcome the spiky haired ones on the ZZAP! Editorial floor. While all the cuties in the other office are adorning their nubile bodies with various pieces of jewellery, the CRASH team is looking very dull in comparison. The only jewellery that is adorning Graeme, our beloved Editor, is a pair of Designer Doc Martens. This must be because he's a REAL man and doesn't believe in all this 'pretty' business. Tony Flanagan who joined CRASH this issue is still a bit of an enigma as far as bodily adornments go. He doesn't wear anything obvious in the office, but methinks that he could be a closet Medallion Man in his spare time! Perhaps I'll send my spies out to the *Starline* (Ludlow's only Night-club) to find out.

Gary Sumpter, office 'cat' and chief Database Minion (he gets kicked when things go wrong) has taken to wearing a George Michael style gold ear-ring and several ethnic bangles. Poor lad has a terrible case of Culture Clash brought on by the hot weather.

Anyway, why all this girlie talk about Jewellery I hear you cry? Rainbird have £200 worth of **H Samuel** jewellery to give away. There's a £125 voucher for first prize, a £50 voucher for second prize and £25 for the runner up. But what must you do in order to win these sumptuous prizes?

Well, I'm fed up with slobbing round the office in a jumper full of holes looking drab and dismal in comparison to the rest of the crew. Design me a glittering item of jewellery, send your artwork in to BEAUTIFY A MINION COMP, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB and make sure it arrives by 28th August. I'll take a look at your designs on that day and award the **H Samuel** vouchers on the basis of merit.



PHOTO: John Minson

GOULASH GOSSIP

Our roving reporter JOHN MINSON meets a couple of Dutchmen over a Hungarian meal in London. . . .

This is a tale of two men who were, unknown to me at the time of the interview, about to take my beloved away. Not in person but . . . well, read on and you'll see.

It all started with a call from **David *Cuddlesome* Carlos** (he insists I treat him with more formal respect nowadays) asking me if I'd like to meet ERNIEWARE.

"The programmers of Split Personalities," asked I, "from the land of clogs and tulips?"

"The same," said the bearded one. "They'd like to meet you because you were the only person to review their first game when they tried to sell it on import over here. Can we arrange a lunch?"

Never one to turn down free nosh, a few days later I found myself walking through Soho accompanying brothers **Ruud** and **Ernest Peske**, **Mark Strachan** — the part of DOMARK that's not DO — and Carlos the chaperone, there to see fair play.

"Will Hungarian do?" he asked.

Well, by this time I was hungry enough to eat anything and gorging on goulash seemed like a great idea so in we stepped.

The interview began well. I conducted the first two or three tape recorded questions with the Pause button on. Eventually we restarted, and briefly recapped the History of Dutch Software — or the History of ERNIEWARE, which is virtually the same thing.

The Netherlands software scene is, "Very poor," according to Ruud. It seems that the Dutch have failed to take the Spectrum to their hearts, which has made it rather an uphill struggle for the Ernies. There isn't even a native Spectrum magazine.

But Ruud had studied computer languages for four years before becoming a teacher, and bought his first Spectrum only eighteen months ago. Ernest, who had taken the same computer course, was put in charge of the graphics.

The Evolution, the program that I reviewed (for another publication!), was one of the first things the brothers wrote. Though it was rather primitive in gameplay, being a block sliding puzzle, the programming was excellent.

Together they approached Dutch retailers, having decided to go it alone. Unluckily, sales were not that great, so they looked for a company to publish their work. At this stage Mark takes up the story.

"What happened was ERNIEWARE sent us a demonstration tape with these ten pictures on it. Richard, our software manager, loaded it up and said, 'Come and have a look.' There was one of Kate Bush. I was used to looking at arcade games and I'd never seen a picture like that on the Spectrum and I said, 'That's brilliant'.

"As a layman I really thought that it was not possible to produce Spectrum drawings like that one of Kate Bush. Then I thought, well they've put so much memory into that one screen to make it look superb. But they hadn't as there were so many pictures.

"I was then not sure whether they could draw better pictures than other people or . . ."

"We had to improve a lot," says Ernest, with undue modesty.

"Anyhow, I said to Richard, 'Phone them up and find out if they do other things." Mark continues

As it happened, ERNIEWARE did do other things and already had the game that was to become *Splitting Images*. I'm interested in how the satirical tie-in came about.

"We wanted to put some humour in," Ruud explains, "It's very important, I think."

In fact it was the pictures of faces in the demo that had worked best, even though most people who do Spectrum graphics have problems with the human visage, according to the brothers Peske.

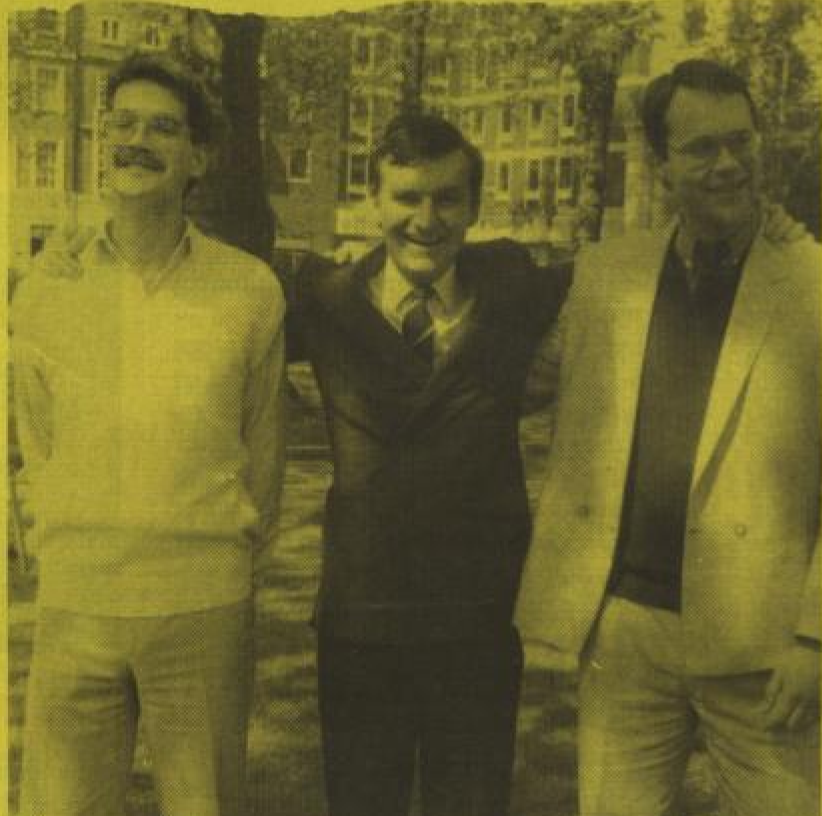
"But how long did it take you to draw them?" Mark asks. I like this. He's doing my job for me.

"Two days."

"What do you use to draw them?" I slip in.

"My own utility. It's not very usable for the window routines."

Ernest works from photographs though he doesn't rate digitising — and everybody who's ogled the grainy renditions of Sam Fox is liable to agree that a good artist will beat the photographic image on the Spectrum, hands down.



Ruud and Ernie Peske enjoy the summer sunshine in Soho Square with Mark Strachan playing 'publisher in the middle'. Ernie is on the left, with the moustache . . .

PHOTO: John Minson





"Choosing the ten pictures was interesting," Dave remembers.

"Marilyn Monroe and Humphrey Bogart were classics and Maggie and Ronnie and Kinnoch were obvious. Sir Clive and Alan Sugar were specific to the marketplace, but after that it was very open. Everybody was throwing in ideas."

Mark picks up the story, "Together we thought of the Queen and wrote to her but the Lord Chamberlain wrote back saying that the answer to that question was really 'No'."

Luckily the Prince and Princess of Wales were delighted with the idea, and Andy and Fergie, a picture which Ruud seems extremely proud of, left it was up to Domark.

Mark stresses that they contacted all the subjects to get their okay and avoid problems, except in cases where it was impossible. If Bogey or Monroe wants to sue no doubt there will be angry table raps from Doris Stokes.

The other legal matter I raise is the question of the game's title, which is, it must be confessed rather similar to a certain satirical TV show.

At this stage Mark categorically denies that CENTRAL TELEVISION is at all concerned about the title and that DOMARK are sure that they are on safe ground because nobody can copyright the a caricature.

However, when the phone rings the next day and it's Mark telling me that *Splitting Images* is now *Split Personalities*, I'm not entirely surprised. When it comes to the law courts the first rule is never to get involved in a long and costly action if you can help it.

Before we take our leave of the *Old Budapest* I have a complaint to make. Cuddlesome Dave has neglected to send me a copy of the program, which is DOMARK'S first CRASH Smash (and their first good game, some would say).

"Have you finished it?" Ruud asks.

"Nowhere near," I say.

"It's really quite simple, I think."

There is much laughter, through which the tape recorder has caught Mark's comment that, "Programmers always say that."

But get a copy I do, and a few days later my girlfriend arrives from Sweden to spend the summer with me. Now she says she hates computers and computer games but out of interest she looks over my shoulder, asks how to play, takes over the joystick . . .

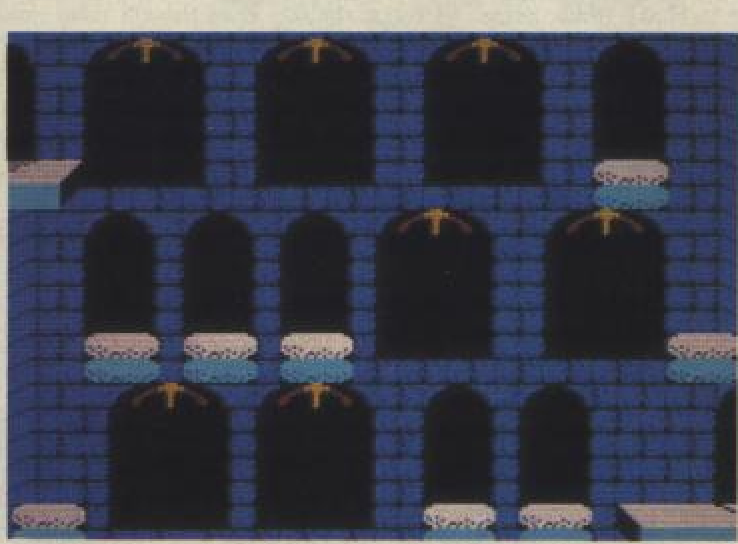
ERNIEWARE, I am going to sue you for alienating her affections. For the last week or so I've only seen her back as she tackles picture after picture. And I wouldn't mind, but while I'm still struggling with Alan Sugar, she's completing Marilyn with consumate ease!

It's enough to make you Spit!

John Minson

LURE OF TH

Accompanied by garrulous ZZAP! dynamo, Julian Rignall, CRASH novice Tony Flanagan zoomed up the M6 to the land of Brookside, Bleasdale and the Beatles to get a sneak preview of SOFTWARE PROJECTS' latest game: *Dragon's Lair*.



Level three, and Dirk the Daring has to get to the top of the three-tiered building.



Perhaps it's because of their Irish forefathers that scousers like telling jokes. Take this one, for example. Er-what d'you call a Liverpudlian in a suit? I don't know, what do you call a Liverpudlian in a suit?. . . . The accused. "People have a sense of humour in Liverpool that makes life quite bearable," explained Alan Maton, director of SOFTWARE PROJECTS, as we ate our lunch in the concrete garden of the Elephant and Castle. Not that Liverpool is a city of doom and gloom, though sometimes it might appear that way to us 'southerners' from leafy towns such as Ludlow. There is something irrepressible about Liverpool and its people that is very infectious. And what is true of Liverpool is also true of SOFTWARE PROJECTS.

The company began life in 1983 and is most widely known for two very successful games, *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy*. The latter, remarked Paul Patterson, the Sales Manager, "is probably the biggest seller of all time." How did they account for this success? "The thing about *Jet Set Willy* and *Manic Miner*," Alan pointed out, "was that they were different from what everyone else was doing at that time." But, like many other companies, SOFTWARE PROJECTS has not had a resounding success with every game released. *Jet Set Willy II*, in particular, was very badly received by the computer games press.

NEW POLICY

Since October 1985, the company has adopted a new policy which puts quality as its main priority. Before then, SOFTWARE PROJECTS had produced about ten games which, as Paul remarked, "didn't do very well and weren't very good." The new policy is only to market very good games — anything of dubious quality is scratched, even if a lot of money has been invested. But how do they decide what is worth marketing?

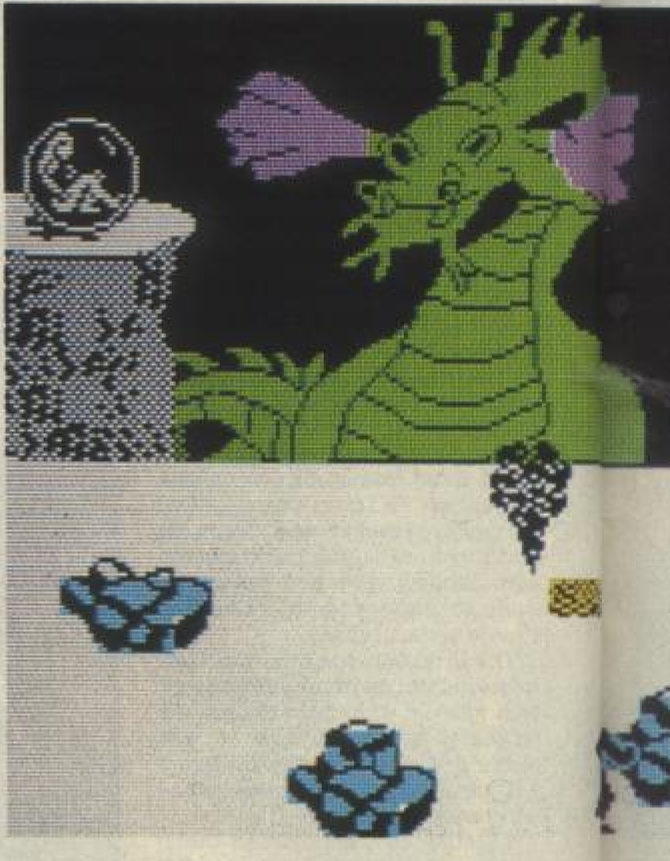
The simple answer is, they don't — well, not all by themselves. Recently, SOFTWARE PROJECTS advertised in their local paper for players to come in and test their games 'in progress'. The players' comments are taken very seriously and usually acted upon. This was also the case with *Dragon's Lair*, as Paul explained. "We brought in people to try *Dragon's Lair* about eight weeks ago. If the response to the game had been negative then, like some of the previous ones, it would have been scrapped." Fortunately, this was not the case.

"Everyone gave the game nine or ten out of ten," said Paul happily. "They asked us to change certain things and we did. Everything they asked us to change, we changed." Dirk, the dynamic hero of the game, was thought to have too big a nose, so slices of it were lopped off in a neat bit of computer surgery. Some thought the first screen was too easy, so that was made more tricky. And there have been several other minor changes, all as a result of players' suggestions.

A CHANCE DISCOVERY

So how did Alan get hold of the right to the game which is fairly well established in the arcades? The story is involved, to say the least. "I went away to Paris for a long weekend and, er, . . . it was shut. I think there must have been a Bank Holiday. On the last day I went into this computer shop and there, in a box, was *Dragon's Lair* for the Coleco Adam." Alan liked the look of the game, bought it and took it home to Liverpool.

Obtaining the rights was a tortuous business. Initially, he contacted COLECO which, when he finally got hold of the right fellah, gave him the go-ahead. Unfortunately, although COLECO had the rights to home computers, they didn't have the rights to make sub deals with the licence. These rights belonged to MAGICOM who, as fortune would have it, had recently gone bankrupt. Eventually, Alan managed to get through to MAGICOM's solicitors who agreed to license the game but explained, as Alan already knew, that the rights to home computers were owned by COLECO. As



Alan put it, it was like "Er-can I go out Dad?"' Ask yer Mum."' Er-can I go out Mum? Ask yer Dad."

Eventually, the matter was resolved and Alan put together what he called a 'Liverpool contract'. Basically, this amounted to "giz it and I'll pay yer," though after several amendments the contract ran to twelve pages and took five-and-a-half months to be processed through the courts. As this was only a formality, SOFTWARE PROJECTS began the programming schedule almost at once.

The progress of the programming has not been without its snags. Jim Darnell, one of the programmers, outlined the initial problem. "First of all we looked at the game

HE DRAGON



Dragon slaying Ludlow Style, a candid snap from a street performance a few weeks ago during the Festival.



Good old Dirk enters another corridor of doom



The final screen: Dirk meets Singe, the Dragon with pink ears. Daphne waits in her bubble, but will Dirk get to the sword he needs to slay the dastardly Singe?

and decided it couldn't be done in 64K on the Commodore — not to do it justice anyway. Then I said to The Boss that I thought the game could run while the tape was loading. It's all based on the fact that you can play one level. By the time you've finished that, another level will have loaded off tape into memory." Unfortunately, unlike the Commodore, the Spectrum version will not have that cunning load while you play facility . . .

The schedule took a major knock when one of the programmers decided to leave, with only two-thirds of the program done! Alan was not impressed. However, curbing any nefarious tendencies he might have had, he phoned up Andy Walker who agreed to help the company through the final phase of the schedule.

Programming the game has been a real team effort. Jim Darnell, Michael Davies, Steve Birtles, Colin Porch, Sue Maton, Nicole Baikaloff, as well as Andy Walker, have all played their part to produce a game which they hope will emulate the success of *Jet Set Willy*. *Dragon's Lair* is now virtually finished. "We've got to the point where the programmers are just tidying everything up," said Alan. It should be in the shops by the middle of August, and stores will be sent demo versions for public display.

DRAGON'S LAIR

So what's the game all about? Basically, "Dragon's Lair" is a cross between an Arthurian romance and George and the Dragon. In it, the heroic knight Dirk the Daring is called upon to rescue King Aethelred's daughter, Princess Daphne, from the fiery breath of Singe the evil Dragon. If the King does not renounce his Kingdom then she will die!

The game has nine screens which, as you progress, become increasingly more perilous. By means of the Falling Disk, you descend into the dungeons of the Castle and progress to the Skull Hallway, haunted by a host of osseous (LMLWD) ghosts and ghoulies. From there, by means of the Swinging Ropes which hang above a steadily ascending fire, you get to Singe's Weapons Room, where the weaponry assumes an insidious life of its own. Next, a series of Ramps has to be negotiated — dally too long, and they disappear from under you. At the same time Giddy Goons, gargoyle-like monsters who don't exactly have your best interests at heart have to be fought off.

Past the Ramps and rampant GGs is the Tentacle Room: Singe's laboratory, where strange hybrids of the creepie-crawlie kind lurk, waiting to enter combat. Once the insectoid nasties have been despatched, hacked carapace from thorax, a ride on the Second Disk takes you to the penultimate level where the Phantom Knight awaits. "This eighth screen," said Paul, "is a game in itself" in that it requires strategic thinking as well as physical dexterity. Finally, if you're incredibly brave and mega-skilful, you reach the Dragon's Lair and get the chance to slay the monster and free the beautiful (and voluptuous!) Princess.

PIECES OF EIGHT

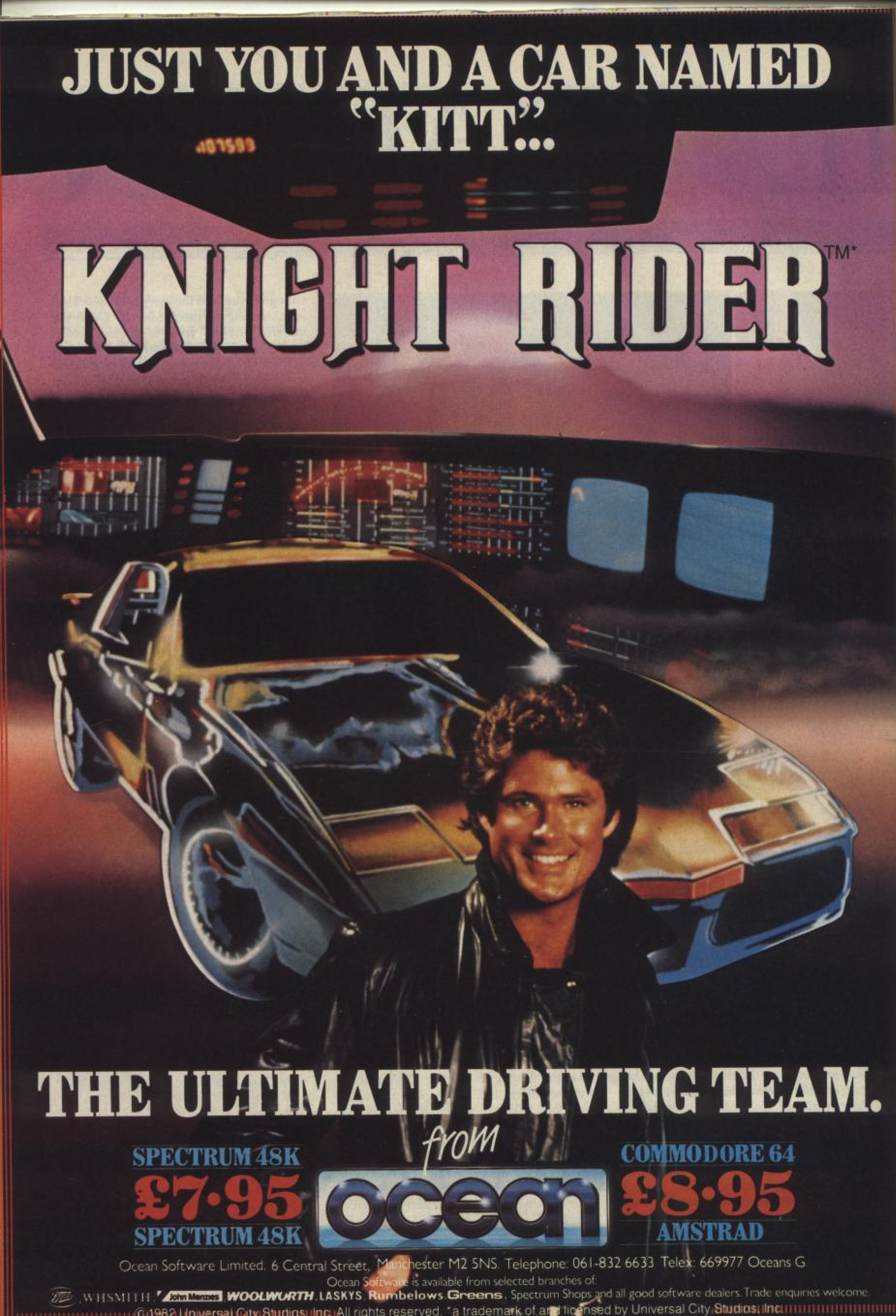
The next SOFTWARE PROJECTS venture, which should be completed by the end of July, is *John Silver's Return to Treasure Island* and coincides with the TV series of the same name. "The idea behind it," Alan explained, "is to write a game which is based very loosely on *Treasure Island*, using the same locations and same characters but with a totally different story. You can write a program like this and get away with quite a lot of differences because you don't have to stick to the book. People play the adventure but they don't know what's going to happen next."

You play the part of Jim Hawkins and the idea is to find the Island's hidden treasure. The Island is reproduced in 3D and is based on the original Treasure Island maps. "It works on a landscaping technique," said Alan, which means that it draws your locations as you go along according to your position. There are, therefore, an incredible 1.5 million possible views all in full perspective.

SUCCESS CAN BE HAIRY

According to Alan, success is simply a matter of having "a bit of nowse, a bit of time and a thorough knowledge of the market." But success certainly hasn't gone to their heads, though both Julian and I enjoyed the trip in Alan's Porsche — a first for us both! But if success hasn't gone to their heads, grey hair certainly has. As Paul complained, "when I came here my hair was curly and black, now it's straight and grey."

As the car coughed and spluttered its way back to Ludlow, I wondered whether grey hair was contagious, and whether one day I myself would own a Porsche. Alas, some things I fear weren't meant to be. Then I thought of one of Alan's jokes which cheered me up a little. "What d'you call a Liverpudlian in a detached house? . . . . A burglar." That would keep me going for a while.



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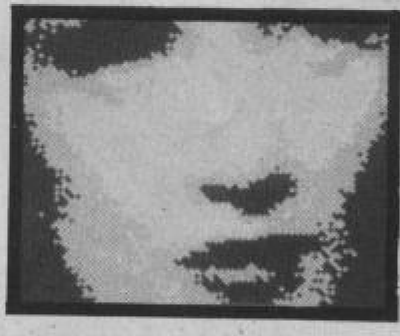
TECH NICHE



BORROWING IMAGES FROM THE TEE VEE



The SUNSET VIDEO DIGITISER for the Spectrum brings out the best artist in me. I don't know how I do it, but within a couple of seconds I can create the most realistic pictures ever seen on the Spectrum screen.





One of Franco's heroines, MARLENE DIETRICH in a guest slot on the Spectrum screen. This sequence of three pictures reveals the way in which the same digitised image can be tinkered with using the software that comes with the SUNSET DIGITISER

The possibilities are enormous. Just plug in the family video camera or the rent-a-video recorder and you'll spend hour after hour tracking down interesting subjects and shading them to perfection for the final print-out. The video frame can be the starting point for an exceptional games loading screen, which can be manipulated with any screen graphics utility to the point of non-recognition. Or ultimately, the digitiser can be part of the home desk-top publishing system, incorporating pictures into editorial text for your local family rag. Either way, the SUNSET VIDEO DIGITISER provides lots of fun.

THE PIXEL OF THE MATTER

Now everybody knows that the Spectrum screen is not a bottomless cup of pixels, but a mere conglomeration of 256 x 192 lonely points, so the TV resolution picture loses somewhat in definition when converted to the Spectrum format. Busy or overcrowded pictures end up rather unrecognisable, but if larger subjects are focussed on, the perception is definitely good. The lower resolution provides a grainy artistic touch, highlighted by the many shading facilities. Taking a picture results in each point or pixel on the Spectrum screen being allocated one of sixteen values representing the brightness level. This master file is stored outside the screen area and requires no less than 24576 bytes.

As the screen dots can only assume two states, on or off, intermediate levels can be displayed in various patterns of dots. Three grey scale modes are available. 'Black and white' provides just two display levels. The brightness of the picture can be adjusted by setting the trip level between black and white to any of the sixteen values. 'Black white and grey' divides the sixteen levels into black, white and one grey level. Again, the two boundaries may be set to accentuate the darkness and the amount of grey zones in the picture. 'Full grey scale' provides black, white and three grey levels and imitates the photographic image on the Spectrum screen as closely as possible. Again, the grey scaling can be set by varying the grey, black and white boundary levels.

THE DIGITISING UTENSILS

Yes, I'm afraid part of the equipment is encapsulated in the usual black interface box with an insignificant phono socket as a major landmark. A cassette tape for the software support together with a NLQ print manual comes with the package. A phono cable with two converters ensures access to any type of video equipment (phono plug, BNC socket and plug). Push interface into lifeless Spectrum, link up to video unit, switch on Spectrum and load software from cassette. Camera roll . . . ACTION!

THE SOFTWARE SCENE

Who doesn't like to be driven by a menu? (*It's all that drives Gary Liddon* — **ED**.) Eight options are available — only one modifies the master file containing the basic picture information. TAKE PICTURE sets the 8-bit A/D converter in motion and transfers the video picture to memory. During six seconds, the software has to convert the 8-bit value from the converter into 4-bit data acceptable to the Spectrum memory size. No flash conversion means a rock steady picture is required for the six second duration. No wobblies, NO ACTION, in front of the video camera and a pretty good freeze frame facility on the ol' video recorder. Noise bars need to be fought into the bottom edge, or even better into oblivion.

Unsuccessful attempts at grabbing a frame are met with a beep, followed by the PICTURE ANALYSER screen, which displays anything from a missing frame sync to a signal format error; this could be wrong number of lines, wrong line length or wrong field format (Interlace, odd, even).

Successful frame grabbing can be improved upon by SET INPUT LEVELS. Maximum and minimum levels representing the contrast of the current picture are analysed and evaluated for a further take. The second scan converts the 8-bit data with a corrected ratio into 4-bit giving maximum contrast.

MOVE INCOMING PICTURE takes into account the fact that only part of the TV picture is transferred to the Spectrum and allows the conversion window to be positioned over the relevant TV screen area for a further take.

GREY SCALES enables the selection of the parameters responsible for the interpretation of the master file data into screen representation. All three grey scaling modes have a bar graph for the selection of the boundary levels (brightness and grey shade control) while PRINT PICTURE ON SCREEN converts the master file data into a screen picture using the aforementioned parameters.

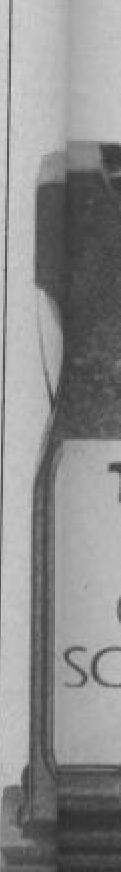
Having lost all the colour information of the original TV picture it might be a good move to display the mono picture in different colours. CHANGE DISPLAYED COLOURS does this at a touch of a key. Unfortunately, there is no provision for changing the border colour. Individual colouring can be accomplished at a later stage once the screen has been stored to tape or cartridge using SAVE/RETRIEVE PICTURE to save the screen picture as a screen file or save and load the master file for further manipulation at a later stage.

Provision is made for producing a backup copy of the software onto cassette or Microdrive cartridge. The reverse side of the cassette contains a print driver routine which can be set up for various printers and printer interfaces. The manual gives a detailed explanation of the control program and provides the programmer with call addresses for the various machine code routines.

CUE AND REVIEW

The SUNSET VIDEO DIGITISER is not a cheap add-on for the Spectrum. Unfortunately it is one of those devices which grab your imagination and you'll find yourself spending far too much of your valuable time designing excellent looking screens with the least possible artistic requirement. No news yet on the printer ribbon that allows you to make iron-on transfers of your pictures for application to shirts — more details next month, hopefully.

SUNSET VIDEO DIGITISER
Price: £128.00 inc P&P
Sunset, 3 New Road, Farnham, Tongham, Surrey GU10 1DF



PROCESSING WORDS ON THE SPECTRUM

DOMINIC HANDY sets his fingers flying over the keys of his computer and evaluates a trio of wordprocessing packages that don't actually improve literacy, but make writing on the Spectrum much easier.

TASWORD III

Producer: Tasman Software
Price: £16.50 (Microdrive); £19.50 (Opus Disk)

The team at TASMAN SOFTWARE have taken the old favourite *Tasword II* and moved it onto Microdrive and Opus Disk, adding more commands, more memory and greatly increasing the ease of use. This seemed to me to be a very brave step on the part of TASMAN as they must think that all their prospective customers have Microdrives or disk systems. I can see them getting a bit worried about running out of memory, but all the rest of the latest batch of word processors made it out on cassette in a very useable form . . .

The main text editor loads in one chunk, and the only other drive access you need is for dumping the text to other peripherals (printers, backing storage and so on). As with *Tasword II*, when you load up you go directly into the text editor, which means you can get down to work straight away.

The text editor at first glance seems the same as *Tasword II*, but a closer look shows that table markers or tabs are available. These are shown on the switches panel at the bottom of the screen. A PAGE BREAK switch has been added that can be used to reveal on screen how text will be printed — a handy facility when it comes to producing the final version of a document. During one-screen formatting, a dotted line is displayed where the page breaks will occur on the printer.

One of the best features of *Tasword III* is the impressive HELP menu. This shows you every command available at the press of a key, and a quarter of the HELP page can be shown at the top of the screen while you are typing. This is useful — for instance if you use printer controls regularly, the graphics symbols which *Tasword III* uses as printer tokens can be shown in the top quarter of the screen, so you don't forget what does what!

Tasword III only features a few brand new commands, but the old commands of the *Tasword II* era have been expanded considerably. The most important addition to its array of over sixty commands are the TAB commands: very useful for setting out charts or tables. TABs act rather like TAB STOPS on an ordinary typewriter and are little markers on the screen which the cursor can jump between. The user can set up any number of character positions between any number of tab stops — a very easy process and a definite plus over any other Spectrum word processor I've come across. The other new addition to *Tasword III* is the expansion of the screen width from 64 characters to 128, which means you can see exactly what your hard copy will look like on the screen, via the very ingenious scrolling of text across the screen.

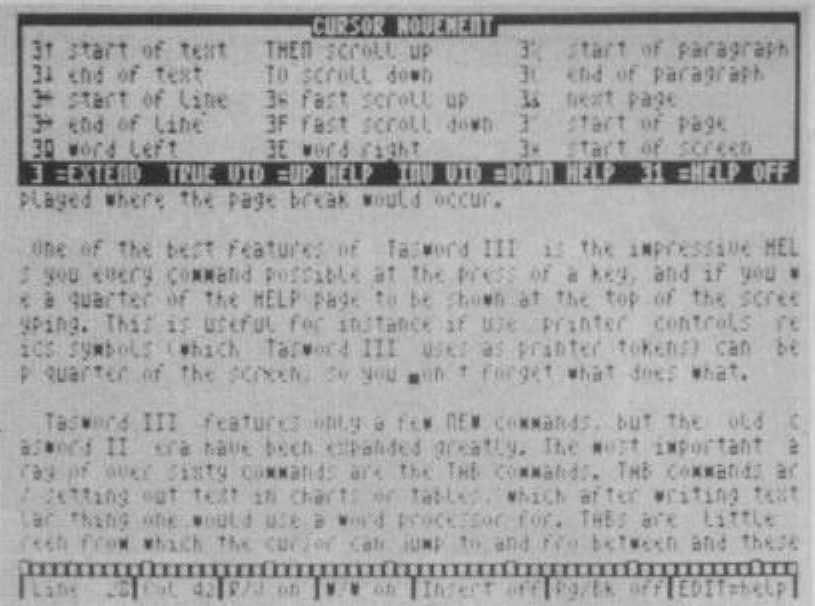
The cursor movement has been expanded too, and it's possible to jump to the beginning and end of lines, paragraphs and printer pages (via page markers). TASMAN have gone to town on the deleting as well: words, lines, paragraphs, blocks and the plain old character behind the cursor can now be deleted, instead of just the cursor character as in *Tasword II*. Paragraphs and blocks have to be confirmed before deletion, and lines can be un-deleted, so there's not much chance of you ruining your text accidentally.

A very useful mode, which is missing from most word processors, is the AUTO INSERT mode. This allows the user to write directly into the middle of a piece of text without overwriting the existing text. Full use is made of the keyboard buffer here, as the existing characters have to be scrolled forward on to the next line.

Tasword III features a very comprehensive printer menu which has all the features of *Word Manager* and more. With all the headers, footers and page number combinations it would be fairly easy to print a simple magazine using *Tasword III*.

There's a word count in *Tasword III*; the search and replace option has been speeded up and the cursor speed has also been increased, thus rectifying the main problems with *Tasword II*. The package offers full value for money, with a word processor, a *Tasword II* translation program, a *Masterfile* interpreter, an introduction letter and tutor as well as a simple but very effective data merge file (which can be used instead of *Masterfile*) included on the cartridge or disk.

There is no doubt about it, to my mind TASMAN have now definitely got the top spot as far as word processors go. With the price of printers and disc drives dropping by the month it's almost worth popping out and getting a system to try it out on. One look at *Tasword III* will take the words out of your mouth!



A TASWORD III text file in preparation, with a quarter of the help page lurking at the top of the screen to jog that lazy memory. Note the status line at the bottom of the screen which shows you how the global commands, such as justification and wordwrap, have been set





An action shot of THE WRITER, which demonstrates the way in which the option windows overlay the text file. Here, the TEXT window has been called onto screen, then overlayed with the TAB window. Alterations to the TABS can be made from the options displayed, then BREAK returns you to the text

THE WRITER

Producer: Softechnics
Price: **£14.95**
(Tape/Microdrive, Kempston/AMX Mouse)
Other disk versions to follow

The Writer comes in a video type cassette box, which contains a very professional-looking manual and a cassette that holds both tape and Microdrive versions of the software. Users of the tape version should notice that you do not get some of the options available on the Microdrive version, like HELP files and the print merging facility. Even so, the tape based software includes all the vital elements of *The Writer*. After a short time using *The Writer* it became apparent that this word processor had been based on the word processors available in the CP/M market.

The Writer uses a very attractive method of accessing the options. When you press the EDIT key, the status bar at the top changes to display six options: FILE; EDIT; TEXT; SEARCH; FORMAT and HELP. Options are selected using a pointing device, which may be a mouse, joystick or the keyboard. The option window then appears using the same technique as *Art Studio*, and subsequent windows can be accessed from this.

Although *The Writer* uses windows, most of the text handling operations can be carried out via the keyboard. This mix of controls allows operations to be carried out very easily at speed. All the keyboard operations are accessed by various combinations of SHIFTs.

On entering *The Writer* you are put straight into INSERT mode as with most CP/M wordprocessors. The layout of this is very professional. You do not miss all the text after the cursor, as in *The Last Word*, or get the very strained process of all the text after the cursor scrolling forward, as in *Tasword III*. What you do get is very easy to use and amazingly fast process not that different to 'good old' Spectrum BASIC.

The basic, non-flashing, inversed cursor can be moved around the 22 line text window in a variety of different fashions — all the cursor options found in *Tasword III* are used, plus the ability to move to special markers in the text, as well as specifying the exact page of text to which you want to jump.

The Writer has two types of marker. The first is a position marker, which can be jumped to at any stage. This is very useful if you want to wander off around the text fiddling with it, but want to leave some kind of marker to return to. The second type of marker is the block marker. One of these can be placed on either side of the text on the Spectrum, thus creating a block which can then be moved around at will. All other Spectrum word processors, including *Tasword II* and *The Last Word* only allow lines of text to be manipulated in this way.

As well as moving blocks you can also save them to backing store, and at a later date include a saved block into the text you are writing. The uses for this seem endless. I found it useful for all types of work — files can be chopped and changed until you get the right mixture. It's rather like a very flexible MERGEing. Unfortunately cassette based users do not have this operation at their disposal.

As with all professional word processors *The Writer* offers TABs. The TAB option is extremely powerful, and can easily give the novice some very business-like results. There are basically three types of TABs: left/right justified; centered and decimal. When the TABulate key is pressed the cursor jumps to the next TAB marker (shown in the RULER line under the status bar) and then carries out the appropriate action when text is entered. If a justification TAB is chosen, then the text is justified to the TAB marker accordingly; text is centered around a Centre TAB marker. If a decimal TAB is used, the text is aligned so that decimal points appear under the TAB marker.

A leader up to a TAB marker may be specified which causes any spaces before a TAB marker to be filled with one of three different characters: dotted lines, dashes or a solid lines. All of these prove useful for clean and neat tables, and once used you wonder how you ever coped without them.

The FIND/CHANGE options on *The Writer* are again the best of any Spectrum word processor. Basic find and change options are allowed, but 'wild card' characters are also permitted. This means that you can tell *The Writer* to look for 'beg?n', and it will find; 'begun', 'begin' and 'began'. Tell it to look for '????' and *The Writer* finds all the four letter words in your text file! You can also choose to look for bits of words — tell *The Writer* to look for 'he' and it throws up 'the', 'he', 'hero' and so on. If instructed accordingly, the software looks for any occurrence of 'GRAEME' and changes it to '-ED'. 'graeme' will be changed to ' — ed' and GRAEME' to '— ED': CAPS for CAPS and lower case for lower case.

The DELETE options available are basically the same as in *Tasword III* but instead of deleting the word the cursor is on, *The Writer* deletes from the cursor position to the end of the word. Not much difference, but it takes those extra precious micro-seconds to delete a word.

Printer tokens are placed as in *Tasword III* but there are only eight styles that can be defined due to *The Writer* using GRAPHICS codes to stand for a string of printer codes. When printing, you can choose to use a mail-merge option, which allows data such as names and addresses to be entered into the text during printing. This option is again out of reach for tape-only users. The data can be produced from a database, such as *The Filer*, which Softechnics is bringing out soon, or data can be input using a simple BASIC program which is listed in the manual.

The Writer includes a very simple printer spooling option. You can tell the program to print the text file, and immediately it puts you back into that text file. But you can't alter the existing text, as in *Word Manager*, but you can add to the end of it. This seemed a bit pointless, as most people only want to print out the text when they've finished it, and not change any errors in the existing text while it's printing!

When printing you can choose to put headers and footers at the beginning of each printed page with the main title and the page number, in Roman numbers, alphabetically or numerically. The heading or footing can be centered or left/right justified, or even printed differently on alternate pages, giving a book-like appearance to the output.

The basic text can be controlled exactly as in *Tasword III*, and even with some of the same control keys! You can centre, left/right justify lines and justify the paragraph and use other jollities that appear in *Tasword III*.

The Writer also includes some extra features like only printing the text if a certain condition occurs in the print merge file — the price of a product being less than a hundred pounds for instance — and working out the actual value of an expression so '100-12/3' (no brackets) would be printed in the text as '104'. A communication program allows the user to LOAD/SAVE *Writer* files, ASCII files, and *Word Star* files, and even send and receive data via a RS232 serial port. Compatability with printer interfaces is a bit less flexible and giving Softechnics a ring before you purchase is a good idea.

A 'proper' keyboard buffer has been included, which allows a sequence of keys to be pressed after an option has been selected: the program flicks through the chosen option without waiting for the prompts to be answered if the keys have been pressed in advance. The keyboard buffer isn't cleared after any option so care is needed — mind the keys you press after you choose an option.

Overall I found *The Writer* amazingly fast and extremely powerful. It is the most powerful word processor I've seen on the Spectrum, and most CP/M word processor writers would do well to look at it. The main attraction points are the very powerful FIND and REPLACE commands, mail-merge, block handling and TABs, but with all these options I found *The Writer* extremely easy to use.

I didn't find using the mouse any quicker, because you have to take your hands off the keyboard and the keyboard buffer was effective enough to make the use of keys as good if not better than the mouse. Any self-respecting Spectrum owner who wants a word processor should definitely go out and get *The Writer*. Softechnics plan to launch a database, a spellchecker and *The Artist II*, all of which are designed for use with *The Writer* very soon. The only thing that was missing was a wordcount facility — very useful when it comes to writing articles such as this, but most users shouldn't find this omission too dismaying.

THE LAST WORD

Producer: Saga Systems Ltd
Price: **£13.95**
(Compatible with: tape; Microdrive; Wafadrive; Opus; Beta; Kempston; Gordon disc drive; Saga Mouse)

SAGA SYSTEMS have built a solid reputation in the Spectrum add-on market based on their peripherals — Spectrum keyboards predominently. Now they have come up with a piece of software that is best used in conjunction with one of the peripherals they sell. Late last year **Nick Buckingham** strolled into the Saga offices to see if they

would publish his word processor, *The Last Word*, as he hadn't had much success doing it himself. Saga were very impressed with Nick's program, but wanted the manual re-written and the software 'tweaked up' on a few points, mainly compatibility with other peripherals. Once this had been achieved, the program was ready for release.

The software is accompanied by a comprehensive manual (which is being updated every time Saga thinks of something extra to put in). The cassette arrives in a NORMAL cassette box (!) and comes with all the relavent programs for transferring *The Last Word* to the storage medium you have as well as the obligatary introduction letter and a very neat piece of software that can convert any *Tasword II* file that you care to give it into something that *The Last Word* understands.

The layout of *The Last Word* is very easy to follow, and on loading you are put straight into OVERWRITE mode. This shows the large 20 line text file window and a very neatly presented status bar at the top of the screen. This contains all the information you are likely to need during the typing in of the document: cursor status, justification, word wrap and so on . . . The text window width can have 4 different settings, 40, 48, 60 or 80 columns. I found the tiny 80 column characters tiring to read but the mode is useful if you want to see what the finished output will be like. The actual print line can be extended up to 146 columns if necessary by using the appropriate number of screen lines to accommodate the text.

The Last Word contains all that the average home and business user would need, and more. Text is typed in as normal but when you want to fiddle about with it care is needed as *The Last Word* is so powerful you could find yourself splicing a textfile in a few swift key movements.

Cursor movement is very comprehensive with all the features found in *Tasword III* except movement paragraph by paragraph. The cursor can be moved around sentence by sentence instead, which I found a bit less useful. The author has also included a useful option which allows the user to input a line number for the cursor to jump to — very useful for moving around in a large chunk of text.

Inserting new text into an existing textfile is easy, but looks a little strange at first. As insertion begins, all the existing text after the cursor disappears until you go back to OVERWRITE mode — this may seem trivial, but I found it very awkward to use, especially when I forgot the gist of the original text.

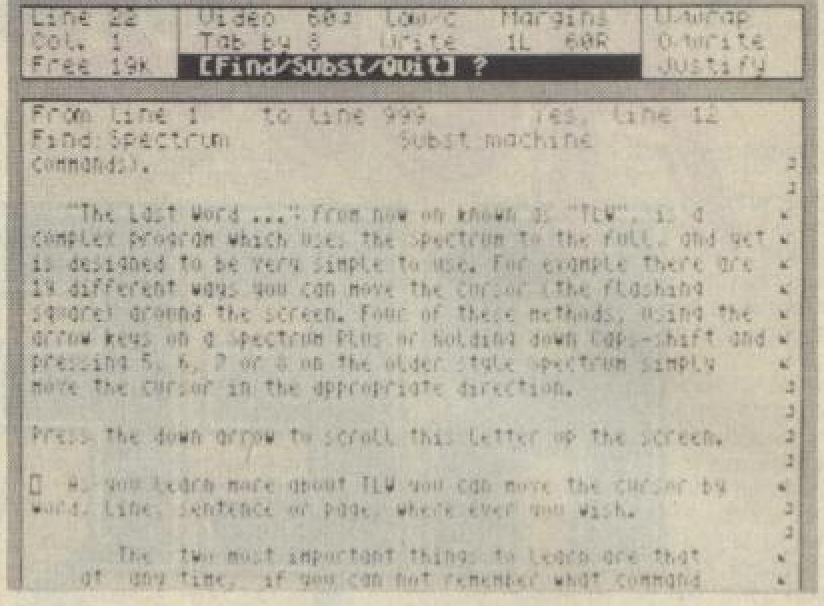
The facilities for deleting text are also very comprehensive and all types of things can be deleted: the cursor character, to the end of a line, to end of the file or the whole file.

The author has tried to dispose of the laborious marking of blocks of text and plumped for the option of inputting the line numbers instead of block markers. This approach means that blocks of text can be deleted by specifying the first and last lines. This is by far the quickest method. There isn't an actual Move Block command, as this can be done using the repeat/delete options.

The first key that a *Last Word* user should memorise is the REFORM to next firm marker key. This effectively rectifies the mess that is made of a paragraph that you've been playing around with by rejustifying the whole lot. The key is well used as most of *The Last Word* options do not rejustify after commands have been carried out, leaving tidying up in the hands of the user.

When any main option that could effect your text is chosen a small window opens up at the top of the screen into which commands are entered. A CALCULATOR mode allows you to use the Spectrum as a normal calculator. This option is very powerful, as the result of computations may be saved as a BASIC variable (m1 to m0) or included in the text. Saved variables may be incorporated in calculations — a powerful and useful facility. The routine, I was told, took up a very small part of memory, so it seems a pity it isn't included in other Spectrum word processors.

The EXCHANGE option allows words in the text to be swapped and can also be used to find a word(s) in the text. If the urge grabs you, every occurance of a word or phrase can be deleted. During exlusive substitution operations it is necessary to know where all the words you want to change occur in the text as *The Last Word* just provides a line number and asks if you want to exchange the occurance of the word on that line. If you don't know where you are in context, you end up guessing! Replacing all occurences of a word or phrase is straightforward enough; unfortunately the keyboard buffer is not cleared and you can end up with lots of 's's over the text. I felt this option was quite limited on its own — it's only possible to exchange strings of up to 16 characters, and the letters have to be input in upper and lower case correctly . . .



A textfile on the LAST WORD, showing the video markers on the right of the screen which indicate the type of return in operation for each screen line (hard or soft). The rectangular status area above the text contains the command area: The find/Substitute/Quit option has just been selected. The first few lines in the text area tell you what the wordprocessor is actually up to — in this case, substituting 'Spectrum' with 'machine'

The Last Word includes an option that allows a simple variable of any length from BASIC to be INCLUDEd into the text file. I found this most useful when I wanted to include saved calculated results or very long bits of text that crop up over and over within an annotated piece of script.

The Last Word includes the use of TABULATION markers, but they are very inflexible as you can only have one width of TAB column. This means that most tables would be hard to enter using these, nevertheless, moving across the line is much quicker via TAB markers.

All the options are accessed via different combinations of shifts, which means that once you're a proficient user of the program there is absolutely no reason to look at the screen menu sytstem while typing. Where *The Last Word* scores particularly highly is via its compatability with practically every disc drive or printer you run with it. Every disk system I could think of, and some I'd never heard of before were catered for with full CAT, ERASE and LOAD/SAVE options, proving that a lot of time had gone into ensuring compatibility — every programmer's nightmare.

The printer options cater for all types of visual output, with 24 different control tokens available. Printer tokens, unlike *Tasword III* take up no screen space and just invert the letter they start at. When an inverted letter is encountered by the cursor, the window at the top of the screen displays the token that is represented at the cursor position. Any number of printer tokens may be placed on one letter, taking up no more screen space. Because of this, the ragged edges of text in the printer output are avoided, unlike in *Tasword III* where graphics characters are taken as text letters and used in justification of lines.

Overall *The Last Word* is a very powerful wordprocessor with lots of little things like the calculator and including of BASIC strings to make it appeal to both the first-time and experienced wordprocessor user equally. Where *The Last Word* fell short was in the expansion of each of the options. There is certainly no lack of commands, but each command fulfills its function with no frills attached: things like the printer menu and exchange menu could have been improved. As *The Last Word* was written to put a new angle on the wordprocessor market, it may take some getting used to, but once mastered it performs beautifully.

RATINGS	The Writer	Tasword III*	The Last Word
User Friendliness	8	10	8
Speed Of Operation	9	9	8
Tab Markers	10	8	5
Calculator	4*	n/a	9
Mail-Merge	6*	8	2
Find/Replace	10	7	7
Peripheral Compatability	7	8	10
Printer Options	7	8	9
FACILITIES			
Screen Line(chars)	64	64	40,48,60,80
Printer Line(chars)	127	128	146
Word Count	No	Yes	Yes
* refers to Microdrive or disk version only			

The Last Word

TECH TIPS



Simon Goodwin looks at the likeliness of LOKI, introduces a 97p lightpen to the Spectrum, chases CHEETAH, reviews *The Code Machine* and Spectrum technical books, disables BREAK and dispenses sundry tips!

DREAMWARE

Whatever plans Alan Sugar may have for the Spectrum, you can rest assured that the much trumpeted 'Loki' project is not among them. I've had a few letters from readers asking about the rumoured Sinclair Megamachine. By now many of you will have read hysterical comments in various comics, so it's probably time TECH TIPS sifted the gist from the gibberish.

The story so far . . . as SINCLAIR RESEARCH slid towards bankruptcy, sundry brains were invited to dream up a wonder-product that would rescue the firm from extinction.

It was obvious that the existing projects would not be enough to save Sinclair. Besides the 128, launched in a desperate bid to stave off creditors early this year, these projects included a kind of Quantum Triple Jump follow-up for the QL, which had to re-use all the old parts to save money, and a portable machine called *Pandora* which was handicapped by the fact that it needed a display that stubbornly refused to work despite six years of development effort. Since the sale of Sinclair's computer business Amstrad have turned down the chance to market *Pandora*, and Sinclair have — at last — given up on the display.

A list of really new possibilities was made, including an IBM *Personal Computer* clone — which may have attracted Mr Sugar's attention given his intention to enter this sector of the market any day now — and a cut-price version of Commodore's *Amiga* — codenamed 'Loki'. If nothing else, leaked details of those projects might have helped Sinclair to stave off the demands of creditors for a while longer.

But as we know, Timex, Thorn EMI and Barclays Bank didn't wait; they chose to over-rule the management at Sinclair and force the firm to sell out to Amstrad.

LOKI THE JOKI

It is not clear whether or not anyone at Sinclair was aware that Loki was the name of an epic liar, epitomised in Nordic legends — in any case, the coincidence of names seems to have passed by other magazines. Here at CRASH, where we spent a while trying to play *Valhalla* before we reviewed it, we spotted the name from that game.

Anyhow, being blessed with lots of headed typing paper and very little money, the Thinkers at Sinclair made a big list of trendy computer features. That list, embellished with a few charts and tables but a noticable lack of circuit diagrams and real detail, finally escaped into the hands of the computer press.

Despite six years of agonising experience of the difference between Sinclair specifications and reality, they swallowed it whole. Technical know-how has never been a strong point in magazines that still — indeed, the same month — print Commodore 64 screen shots in their Spectrum software preview section.

THE PRICE IS WRONG

The fact is that the proposed machine would take literally years (plural) to build, at a cost of millions. It has taken four years for a single-minded, well-funded firm, led by Jay Miner — designer of the Atari 800, and several sophisticated Atari coin-op arcade machines — to develop the *Amiga*. Relatively little of that time, you can be sure, was spent writing the specification.

When the Loki 'exclusive' appeared I spoke to an ex-Sinclair designer. He hadn't heard of the project — 'dreamware', he called it — and poured scorn upon the suggested price of £200. Even if the machine could sell in the vast quantities needed to repay the development costs (and the interest on the money borrowed to support that level of production), it couldn't be made, packaged, distributed and sold for £200.

Remember, this isn't just a machine with 'Amiga graphics' and 'Fairlight sound' — it also boasts a fully-buffered expansion bus, RGB, composite and TV display outputs, a serial port, two joystick ports, a light pen (supplied), three different types of MIDI (musical instrument) port, stereo (sampling) sound in and out, a headphone socket, and a video recorder/video disc interface. If that's not enough you can plug in a floppy disk, hard disk, compact disk, mouse and modem as 'extras'. See what I mean about a shopping list? "What! No Microdrives?" I hear you cry.

When it comes to costing this sort of thing it's not just a matter of flicking through a few catalogues and adding up component costs. No one can work out a firm price on the custom chips intended to go into the Loki, as they've not been designed, let alone tested and fabricated. We're talking about very large, very fast components — chips with about eight times the power of the Spectrum's (none-too-reliable) ULA.

A 7MHz machine, with 52K of video memory and an asynchronous graphics processor could not use standard, cheap, RAM chips; you'd have to use the scarce and expensive 64K by 4 components which are one of the reasons for the high price of the *Amiga*.

There are unconfirmed rumours that Amstrad may have obtained some options to use the *Amiga* chip set. These tales may be true, and it's certainly possible that Amstrad may be in the running for such rights if Commodore was forced to sell. But the Amiga chips rely upon the 16 bit bus of the 68000 processor, and there's no practical way to use them in a Z80-based Super-Spectrum. In any case, the 'details' of Loki appear to have come from Sinclair, not Amstrad.

THE REAL WORLD

It may be fun to dream about Loki, but the fact is that it won't appear, and nor will anything like it.

All we can look forward to is Amstrad's Spectrum Plus 2 — the 128 with a cassette recorder "glued on", to use Mr Sugar's own phrase — and, very likely, a dirt-cheap Spectrum games console this Christmas.

But don't despair — we've yet to see everything the humble Spectrum can do, and we've hardly explored the possibilities of the 128 at all. Don't believe all you read, even in CRASH!

THE LOKI — A SUGAR COMPUTER?

Guaranteed free from artificial press speculation it is not . . . Full of Monosodium Glumate rather than Silicon, this version of the LOKI is exclusive to CRASH. Now it's been photographed, the 'computer' has been consumed with the aid of Roger 'Gannet' Kean. But do not despair! You too could own a specially commmissioned CRASH LOKI. All you have to do is come up with another name for the Speculative MegaSpectrum. Send your suggestions in to LOKI COMP, TECH TIPS, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SY8 1DB to arrive by 28th August. Best name wins its sender a scrummy chocolate comestible (LMLWD) like the one in the picture. Burp!



CODE MACHINE

PICTURESQUE'S popular machine-code Editor/Assembler and Monitor/Disassembler have been relaunched by *Discovery Software* — a branch of Gremlin Graphics. The programs used to be published separately at a price of £8.95 and £7.95 — you can now get both for £12.95. The package supports Microdrives, the Interface 1 network and a very wide range of printers, but there's no mention of disk compatability.

Picturesque's Assembler first appeared way back in 1982. For a long while it was one of the best around, used by firms like Quicksilva and Oasis. The program has been steadily improved over the years, but it's looking a bit dated in 1986.

The editor uses a 40 column tabular display. The delete key scrubs characters but it doesn't close up the text to the right. This is not as bad a restriction as it sounds, when working with short assembler mnemonics, but it does mean that you have to re-type lines every so often.

Every line has a four digit number, which can be automatically generated if you wish. The editor works much like the ZX BASIC editor, with the addition of single-key commands to delete, copy and renumber groups of lines. Files can be merged from tape or Microdrive, and you can list from any line number, or from any label — a nice touch.

Program comments are not very well supported — they have to be enclosed in inverted commas, indented on lines of their own. Labels may be no more than six characters long — DREDFL!

The Assembler is fairly run-of-the-mill. You can fit about 25K of source into memory — enough to generate 3 or 4K of machine code. After that you can assemble from up to ten files on tape or Microdrive — a slow and (with tape) fiddly process. You must assemble the code into memory — you can't send it directly to tape or Microdrive. You can print or display assembly listings, and the contents of the label table. Error messages are adequate.

Numbers can be entered in decimal or hexadecimal (base 16). Maths is limited to 16 bit addition and subtraction, plus operators to extract the high and low bytes of a 16 bit value. There's no support for macros or conditional assembly, but interestingly the assembler does recognise 70-odd undocumented Z80 instructions: SLL and various instructions to handle IX and IY as four eight-bit registers. As far as I know this is the only assembler which supports those instructions.

THE MONITOR

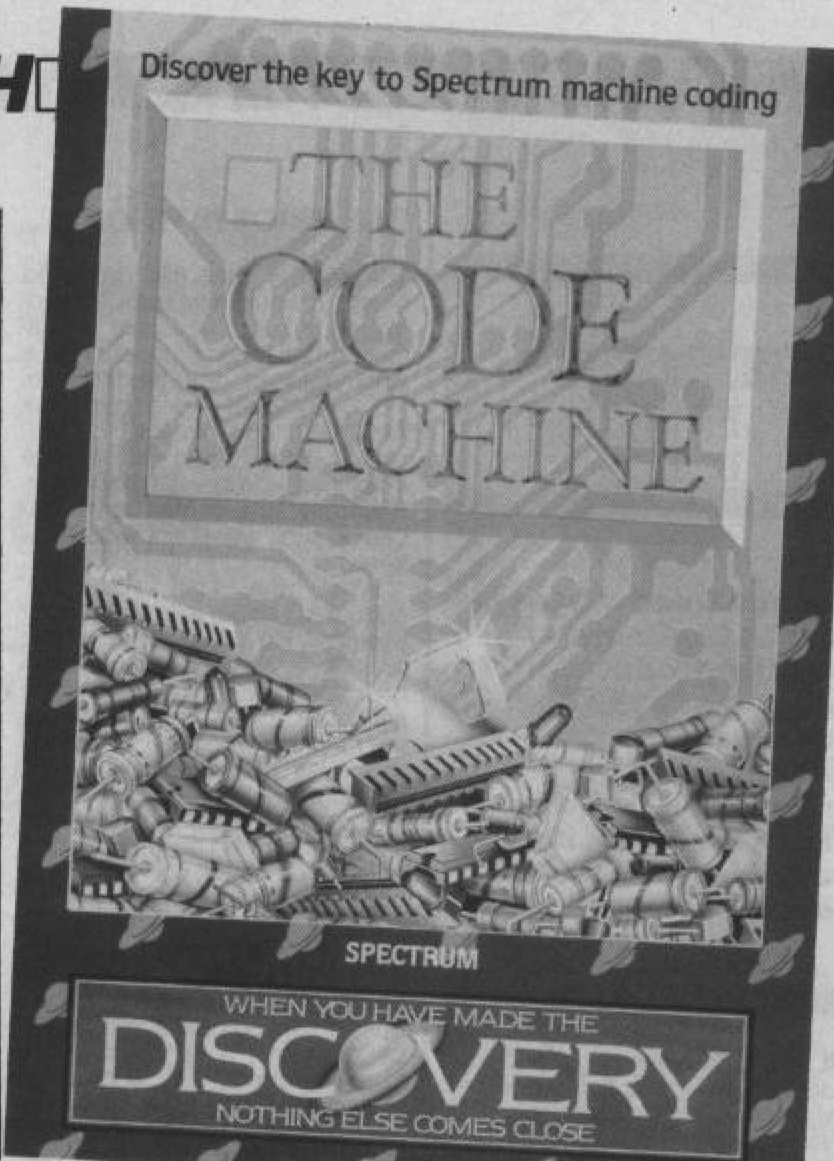
A Monitor is a program that lets you test and examine machine code — your own or someone else's. *The Code Machine*'s offering is 8K long, and can be loaded to more or less any address, so you can load it with the assembler.

The monitor is also fairly run-of-the-mill. You can move, fill, search and edit areas of memory. There are a couple of useful but potentially hazardous commands for inserting and deleting bytes from tables. Annoyingly, all values must be entered in hexadecimal, although you can convert from hex to decimal or vice versa with a special command.

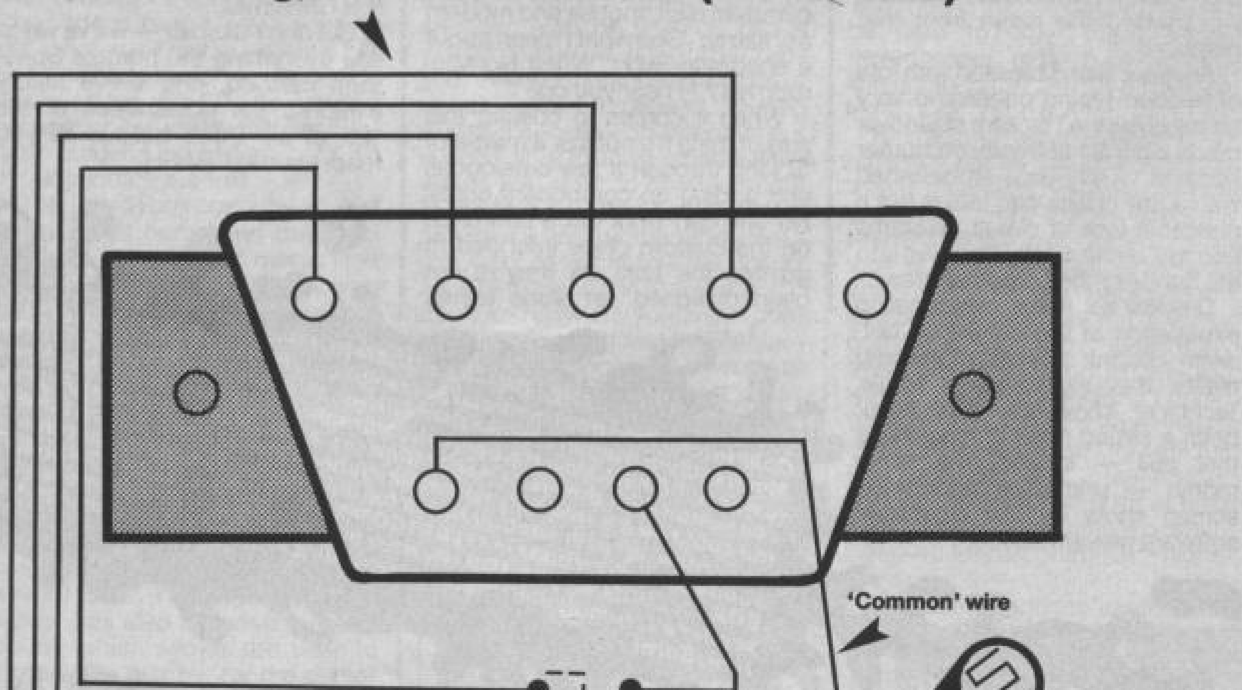
The disassembler generates a mnemonic printout or screen listing from memory contents. There are no labels, so disassembled code can't be loaded back into the editor.

When you come to test code the monitor is usable, but unsophisticated. You can step through code, one instruction at a time, checking or changing registers and optionally performing subroutine calls at one mighty bound. Alternatively you can set a single 'breakpoint', and set the program running; when the breakpoint is reached the monitor will be called automatically.

You can't ask the monitor to check register values as code is tested. There's only one breakpoint, so you can't trap several possible events without stepping



Joystick Plug, seen from behind (solder side)



CRASH Lightpen/Sensor Interface

through the code, line by line.

The Code Machine has a readable 61 page A5 manual, written in a tutorial style. It's clear and well organised when you're learning about the package, but it's a poor reference guide. There are several summary tables, but there's no index.

If you want a simple, easy to use package, *The Code Machine* is a reasonable buy. But if you intend to write a lot of machine-code you're better off paying an extra £2 for OCEAN's *Laser Genius*.

And now for a trip into the TECH TIPS Postbag. This month a few tips and hints were lurking, together with the odd query . . .

ZEUS MERGE

Gordon Waddell starts his letter by saying that *Zeus* is the best assembler, but he can't be too sure because he asks for a free copy of *Laser Genius* in his P.S.! Gordon will have to struggle on with *Zeus* for a while, because this month's prize has gone to **Joe Maragh**.

Gordon's tip lets you merge two assembler text files. Load the first into *Zeus* as normal, then use the 'T' function to find the start and length of the text. Add the two values together, to find the address immediately after the first file, and subtract two, to get the address for merging. Go back to BASIC and use LOAD CODE to read the second file to that address. You subtracted two so that the second file over wrote the 'end' marker from the first. Finally, re-enter *Zeus* and use the renumber and delete functions to tidy the combined text.

SUPER RESET

It's time to return to the Spectrum Reset button project, published in the April issue of CRASH. **Simon Canfer** has written in to point out that you can add the button without pulling your Spectrum apart and invalidating the guarantee.

The Kempston joystick interface, and others like it, fits onto the connector at the back of the computer, where the Reset switch is wired. If you trace the appropriate pins from the computer to the connector in the interface you can put the wiring for the Reset button there, rather than in the computer. There's plenty of room for a resistor and a small push-to-make switch — the switch can stick out of a hole drilled in the plastic interface box.

There was a bit of confusion in the original Reset button article — the text said you should connect a wire to the leftmost edge connector finger, whereas the diagram showed a connection to a double-width pad next to the slot on the circuit board. The diagram was right and the text was wrong, although the button will usually work either way.

CHEETAH GO SLOW

Bob Pierson of CHEETAH tells me that their long-awaited sound sampler should be on the market early in August, although hardware delivery dates are notoriously unreliable. There won't be a special version for the Spectrum 128, but the standard device should work in 48K mode. It will ignore all the extra memory, which is a crying shame as good-quality sampling soaks up quite a few 'K' for every second of sound recorded.

Apparently the soldering superstars are having trouble getting the device to re-trigger itself at the behest of external devices — music keyboards, drum machines and the like. It seems that the machine code timings needed for good results are so tight that there's no spare time to check for interruptions while the gadget is making noises. Unless Cheetah solve this one you'll have to prod a key at Warp Factor Eight if you want those 'Ni-ni-ni-nineteen' effects.

Apart from that, everything is said to be working fine. The device will let you load short sounds into the computer via the supplied microphone; you can then look at a graph of the sound (much as you can with our TECH TIPS *SpecDrum* utility), specify cut-off points at the start and end of the recording, and a sustain area which will be re-re-re-repeated while you press a key. You can store and recall several short samples at any time, but the total duration of the samples is limited to a few seconds.

The electronics will compress the signal, making the most of the eight-bit bandwidth, just like 'budget' (£200-£500!) recording studio gear. You can mix a varying amount of the input signal with a delayed copy from the computer's memory, so echo and reverb effects are possible. Fairlight synthesiser-style pitch-changing effects are likely to be limited, because Cheetah want to keep the quality of the sound as high as possible.

Many readers will be disappointed to hear that there are no plans to allow sampled sounds to be loaded into the *SpecDrum*. In theory this should be easy — maybe Cheetah are trying to protect the market for add-on drum sounds by doing this. If so, I think they're being silly; as soon as the hardware arrives I, and doubtless many other *SpecDrum*mers, will start work to add that feature. Expect a full review of the Sampler sometime in September.

DRUM BEATING

As I write (at the end of June) the new *Electro Kit* of sounds for the

SpecDrum had been released, but no copies have turned up on the shelves yet. Cheetah blame this on Boots' lethargic warehousing, and say that they'll supply the kit by mail order for £4.99, from their Cardiff offices.

Two readers have sent in their own menu-driven drum-sound editors, based on the listing in the June CRASH. **Ian Webster** has compiled part of the code, and added a rudimentary 'sound play' command which lets you listen to new effects without loading the Cheetah drum system. Richard Noble has written a utility to merge two sounds — he says that great effects can be obtained by merging one drum with another very quiet, reversed sample.

A second cassette from Richard has just arrived, containing a program which lets you create synthetic sounds by mixing sine waves on the screen. The results are fun — reminiscent of early *OMD* records.

The latest version of the *SpecDrum* software apparently works on the Spectrum 128; **Jon Bates** should have details of the upgrade elsewhere in this issue. At the moment Cheetah have no plans to bring out a special 'big drumkit' version of the SpecDrum for the 128, but they may think again after Christmas.

READER'S ROBOTS

Several readers are working on Spectrum-controlled robots, and one common problem is getting signals from the real world into the computer. **Christopher Chapman** and **Paul Graham** recently wrote in to ask for advice on this, and it just so happens that **Joe Maragh** has come up with a neat solution.

Joe wins this month's £20 worth of software for his interfacing ideas, which are simple but very effective. Even if yours is a robot-free zone you may be interested to hear how you could build a light pen or computer-controlled burglar alarm for less than £1.

The easiest way to add sensors to any type of Spectrum is via a joystick interface. The exact variety doesn't matter — you can use a Kempston, or Interface 2, or even the Instant Interface from CRASH Issue 23. If you pick the CRASH interface you should keep the connections as short as possible, to avoid diverting interference into your computer.

Each joystick socket will allow you to connect up to five switches or other sensors to your computer. You can read the sensors on a Kempston interface with the command IN 31 — the result is 0 if all the switches are open, or a value between 1 and 31 depending upon the combination of closed switches. Interfaces that return characters can be read with INKEY$ or IN (as documented in Chapter 23 of the old Spectrum manual) for combinations of keys.

The wiring for the sensors is shown in the figure. The wire marked COMMON goes to one side of each switch, and connections A to E go to the opposite side. If your interface can be read with INKEY$ you should make sure that the sensors are normally open-circuit, or the Spectrum keyboard will be disabled when the sensors are wired up. If this is a pain you can always put a switch in the common wire, to cut out the signal from the sensors when it is not wanted.

THE ALL-SENSING SPECTRUM

You can use just about any on/off device as a sensor. There's no risk of damage to your Spectrum or interface, as long as the things you connect have no internal power supply. Such devices should be wired up via a relay, to keep the power away from the computer.

The interface output is only about a milliamp at five volts, so there's no risk of blowing up yourself or the sensor. It doesn't matter if you short-circuit the output — that's just what a joystick does! In face anything with a resistance under 10K ohms will give a signal.

Microswitches or push-buttons can be used to detect movement; mercury tilt-switches detect changes of angle, and reed relays detect magnetism. All of these should be available from electronic component suppliers for under £1 a throw. Joe's cleverest idea was to connect a Light Dependent Resistor to the interface.

An LDR, or photoconductive cell is a small component which only lets electricity pass when light falls on it. The electronic parts firm Maplin sells LDR's for 97p (part number HB10L). Other suppliers, such as Tandy, call it an ORP12.

LIGHT WORK

Joe explained how you can use the LDR as a burglar alarm, detecting light in a room at an unexpected time. Of course, you'll need to the normal BEEP if you want to frighten the intruder away! Alternatively you could build a light-based communications link between two computers — say, across a road. The LDR detects a flashing signal (possibly via a telescope) and software decodes it.

When I tried this, it struck me that it should be possible to use the LDR in a light pen. It works very well, although you obviously have to write your own software.

For test purposes I put the LDR in a roll of cardboard and moved it along the roll till the computer got a signal when the 'wand' was pointed at a black area. A tin cigar tube would probably be a better holder. The LDR is quite sensitive, so you may need to put some kind of filter over the end — I found a piece of file-paper was ideal.

The LDR is about a centimetre in diameter, so the resolution is limited, although clever people could probably fix up a set of lenses to improve this. The response-time is not very fast — certainly not quick enough to keep up with the dot on the TV screen — but the same is true of most commercial lightpens.

You can find out where on the screen the pen is pointing by sending a flashing line across the screen attributes, vertically and then horizontally. You'll have to experiment to find the best speed. Once you know the rough position of the pen you can follow it by flashing characters around the last known position till you pick it up again.

Stray light may cause problems, but you can minimise them by adjusting the TV or putting an extra switch inside the 'pen', either connected to another sensor wire from the interface or in series with the LDR. With appropriate software you can ignore signals unless the switch is on.

This idea is wonderfully simple, but it works! My thanks, and £20 of software of his choice, to Joe for the original idea.

UNBREAKABLE SOFTWARE

Brian Harris says he's been trying to find out how to disable the Spectrum BREAK key for the last two years; finally he's written to TECH TIPS for help.

If you POKE 23659 with 0 you prevent the computer from using the bottom part of the screen — the INPUT area. Error messages are printed there, so the computer will hang up if you press BREAK, as the message can't be displayed. This trick has three snags: INPUT, CLS and BORDER all write to the bottom part of the screen. You have to replace INPUT with INKEY$ showing characters in the top part of the screen, if need be. You can get the effect of CLS and BORDER by POKEing colour information — the values that ATTR would return — into display memory, and using OUT 254, COLOUR to set the border colour.

Addresses 23613 and 23614 tell the Spectrum how to 'tidy up' if an error — such as BREAK occurs. POKE 23613,4:POKE 23614,61 make the computer reset itself if BREAK is pressed. Unfortunately RUN, CLEAR, GO SUB and RETURN overwrite the POKEd values, so your program must repeat the POKES at once after any of those commands.

If you want a really neat solution you should get a toolkit package such as *Supercode III*, from **CP Software.** Most toolkits include machine code routines which you can use to divert BASIC to a certain line whenever BREAK is pressed.

ROM DISASSEMBLY

A couple of letters have been diverted to TECH TIPS from Lloyd's Forum. **Simon Owen** asks where he can get a disassembled listing of the Spectrum's ROM, so that he can use standard routines in his programs. The first two books on this subject, published by **Melbourne House** and written by **Ian Logan**, are by far the best I've seen.

Understanding your Spectrum contains an overview of the Z80 instruction set, plus a summary of the ROM routines and the way they fit together. The book contains lots of examples, and interesting sections on floating-point maths and ROM bugs.

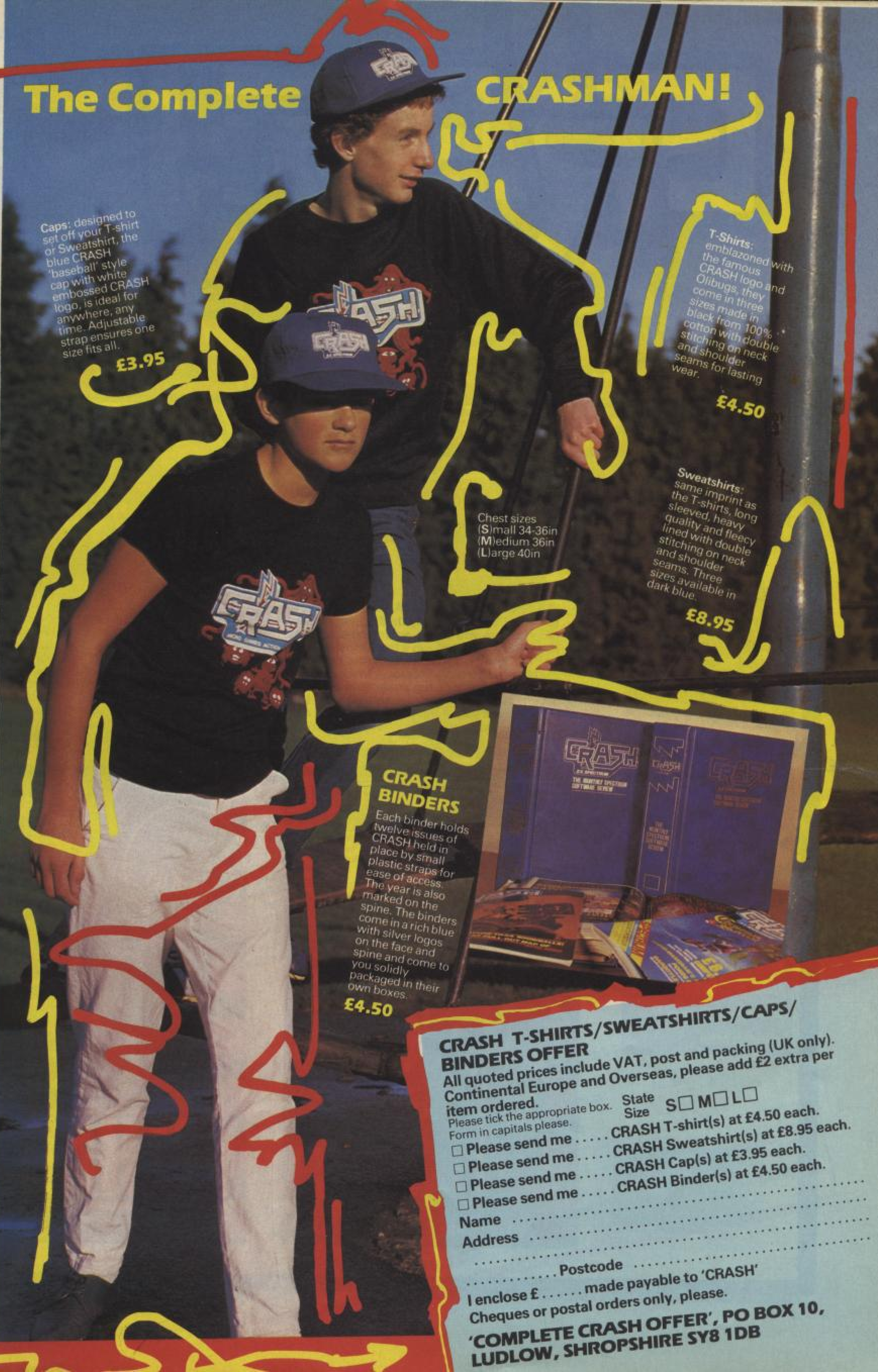
If you need even more detail, *The Complete Spectrum ROM Disassembly* contains a line-by-line commentary on the entire ROM. The level of detail is very high, so the book is not easy reading.

I suggest you get *Understanding your Spectrum* first, and then the Disassembly if you need more detail. The prices were £7.95 and £9.95 respectively. when I got the books. You can order them from any large bookshop or computer specialist. I'd be interested to receive alternatives for review.

Christopher Quinn asked for the address of **ZILOG**, makers of the Spectrum's Z80 processor. I called Zilog UK and was told that they will not deal with 'the public'. The best Spectrum-specific hardware book is **Adrian Dickens'** *Spectrum Hardware Manual* (again, published by Melbourne House). The definitive heavyweight programming book is **Rodney Zaks'** *Programming the Z80* (**SYBEX**), but there's no shortage of others.

NEXT MONTH

Next month TECH TIPS will be spilling the beans — perhaps literally — on a trick that lets you repair a broken Quickshot joystick, armed only with a sharp knife and a baked bean tin. I'll uncover the mysteries of 'continuous' sound effects on the Spectrum 128, and explain how you can smooth out spikes in your Mains electricity supply. Meanwhile, keep those letters coming — I've got £20 worth of software to give away for neat tips, so get your entries in! Write to me, via TECH TIPS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.



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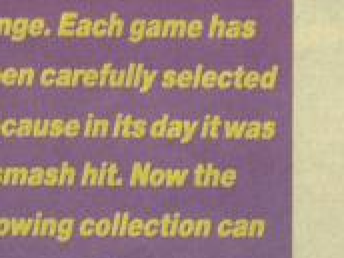
ZX SPECTRUM

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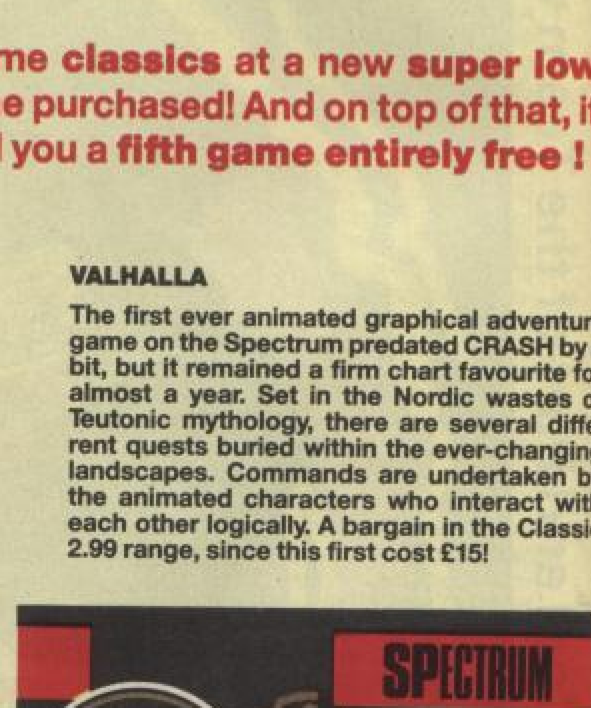
3D DEATHCHASE

The first ever CRASH SMASH (92%) went to MICROMEGA's superbly thrilling high speed game where you chase enemy bikers, tanks and helicopters through a tree-infested landscape. Even by today's standards the 3D is excellent and makes the player feel he's really there, sitting astride the armed and powerful bike, hurtling around the threatening tree trunks in pursuit of the fleeing enemy. A simple idea, that makes an utterly compelling game.



VALHALLA

The first ever animated graphical adventure game on the Spectrum predated CRASH by a bit, but it remained a firm chart favourite for almost a year. Set in the Nordic wastes of Teutonic mythology, there are several different quests buried within the ever-changing landscapes. Commands are undertaken by the animated characters who interact with each other logically. A bargain in the Classic 2.99 range, since this first cost £15!



Classics 2.99









SKOOLDAZE

MICROSPHERE surprised everyone with this unique mixture of humour, arcade and adventure. You play Eric, a skoolboy hero with a mission and a handy line in catapults and skiving. The beautifully designed backgrounds and the ever-busy, realistic animation of the skoolkids enthralled CRASH reviewers in December 84 who SMASHed it at 93%, giving Microsphere their second SMASH (*Wheelie* being the first). A mixture of skill and lateral thinking is required to solve this one!

FULL THROTTLE

Gave MICROMEGA a second CRASH SMASH (91%) in the August 84 issue. As we all waited for the long delayed *Pole Position*, it seemed this bike race track game had done it already. Superbly implemented 3D and loads of other racers on 10 famous international tracks made this one of the most addictive games on the road, and one which remained a firm Top 10 favourite for months.

THIS MONTH'S FREEBIE!!

REMEMBER — IF YOU BUY ALL FOUR OF THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC 2.99 RANGE THEN YOU CAN HAVE A FIFTH GAME ENTIRELY FREE! AND FOR THIS MONTH IT'S

HARRIER ATTACK

By Durell

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DYNAMITE DAN II COMPETITION

WIN A GENUINE WURLITZER JUKEBOX!

Crash Competition

Once again my peace is shattered. There I was, resting quietly in the Broom Cupboard reading Smash Hits, well away from those bossy CRASH people when BOOM, BOOM, BOOM. Hefty fists start pounding the cupboard door and a pair of large hairy hands reach in and drag me kicking and screaming into Editorial. After I've been ordered to make copious cups of tea, the CRASH team start to grin horribly and suggest I scuttle off to a dark corner and write a competition. Politely I decline, and politely they suggest a quick game of tarring and feathering. Sulking, I relent.

MIRRORSOFT is on the verge of launching *Dynamite Dan II*. In the game, Dan is up against his arch enemy Dr Blitzen who is poisoning the minds of young people with subsonic recordings pressed onto pop singles. Dan sets out to save the world, and travels in his trusty airship to the Islands of Arcanum, where Dr B has set up his HQ. Frantic platform action follows, as Dan leaps around looking for records and jukeboxes to play them on — a password has to be pieced together and a record pressing plant disabled if all the young people in the world are to be saved from Dr Blitzen's evil influence.

Seeing as the game is all about records (and jukeboxes) MIRRORSOFT has donated a genuine Wurlitzer juke box as the top prize in this competition — it looks rather like the one illustrated here, and comes with the Top Ten records already nestling in it. It'll also be set to Free Play, so you won't have to keep stuffing Ten Pee pieces in it to hear your favourite tunes. Five runners up are also set to collect the Top Ten chart records by way of consolation prizes.

As this competition was written at such short notice (sulk) I decided to use my trusty music papers for inspiration. Below are a few questions which, if answered correctly, should put you in the running for the Wurlitzer Juke Box.

Jot down the answers on the back of an envelope or postcard and whizz them off to me, care of the WURLITZER COMPETITION, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB. Closing date is 28th August, so get your skates on . . .

1) *Who has been losing sleep because her papa preaches?*
2) *What mind are furniture out of?*
3) *What group has had a new beginning?*
4) *Who wants to be touched (and it shows)?*
5) *What recent CND festival did* The Cure, Housemartins, Simply Red *and* Half Man Half Biscuit *appear at?*
6) *Which computer character and friends are paranoid?*
7) *Who wants to go all the way (any answers regarding Sam Fox will be ignored)?*
8) *From what song are these lyrics extracted: "Oh I think I've seen the house I'd like to buy / so please say you'll marry me before I cry"?*
9) *Who's "too good to be forgotten"?*
10) *What is Gary Glitter's real name?*



Five sets of the Top Ten singles up for grabs!

1986 PBM MAILBOX

PBM FORUM

Since the PBM MAILBOX began in June's CRASH I have received a number of reader's letters (and also a bit of junk mail). Any which way up, here is a small selection of the letters which have found their way through CRASH Towers' post bag to my part of the world.

BRENDON takes a look at an old favourite this month, STARGLOBE, and allows a few readers' views to get a wider airing . . .



STARGLOBE

StarGlobe is a game of three dimensional space exploration. The player is the captain of a Mondian starship under orders from the Lord of Monde to explore the Starglobe (a globular cluster of 2000 stars — MONDE being the central star). The player must also try to establish a communications base at the rim — the radius of the starglobe is 50 lightyears. This is the player's Prime Directive. He can, however, play the game in any of a number of roles which do not directly involve the Prime Directive

THE MERCHANT is a sly, peaceful player who buys and sells whatever he can get his hands on; the PIRATE is a belligerent character who takes pleasure in harassing the other players and plotting against the Lord Of Monde; the XENOBIOLOGIST seeks out alien life and alien artefacts; the BOUNTY HUNTER is an evil 'goody' who destroys pirates for payment; the EMPIRE BUILDER establishes an empire of stars and colonises as many suitable worlds as possible, using their productive output to build various devices of his own design . . . and so on.

Starglobe is an open-ended game which can accommodate about 100 players of various strengths and skills. The starglobe is so vast that you can easily hide yourself away if you wish, whilst player interaction is still available to those who want to trade, fight, or whatever. It is a very realistic game — I could go as far as to say that it is more a simulation of interstellar travel than a game! **Ken** and **Carol Mulholland** (who meekly claim responsibility for this game) have not only created a relativistic universe, they have also given it 5,000 years worth of history. The printouts are quite impressive, often being over 6ft long!

THE TELEPATH

Starglobe is one of my favourite games, and it has built up quite a following among PBMers worldwide. As a result of this popularity I launched a *Starglobe* fanzine in 1985 called THE TELEPATH. THE TELEPATH (fondly known as TT) contains helpful articles on playing the game, as well as general PBM chat, interplayer messages and a considerable slice of humour. Currently into its tenth issue, TT has built up a loyal readership and is now considered by TIME PATTERNS as an influential part of the game! THE TELEPATH is sold to players at cost price and is distributed by TIME PATTERNS — if you join the game, I recommend TT very highly (no bias here, you understand).

CONCLUSION

StarGlobe is a very interesting and enthralling game — the only limit to what you can do is your imagination. You have an orbital factory on board your starship with which you can build almost anything that is physically possible, such as advanced weapons systems or goods useful in trading. Great fun.

It is a game well worth trying, although perhaps a touch overpriced at £1.90 per turn. The GMs are generally friendly and the software more or less reliable (bugs have been known to cause problems but since there is over 7MB of program data, this is hardly surprising.)

StarGlobe Four is due to be launched in September, so if you would like an early launch you can post a £2 cheque/postal order to TIME PATTERNS and they will place you on the waiting list and get in touch during early September. The £2 covers your startup and first printout. Have fun if you join! Starglobe diplomatic relationships can get pretty confusing . . .

TIME PATTERNS: 97 Devonshire Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B20 2PG
(021 523 4446) Ken and Carol Mulholland

A FANATIC WRITES . . .

Dear Brendon,
I was delighted to see your article on the Play By Mail Games world in the June issue of CRASH. I very much hope that over the coming months your column will shed much-needed light on a subject that is to me (and probably many others) still something of a mystery.

I quite enjoy playing Dungeons and Dragons type games and space trading games on my trusty Spectrum, but I am not a fanatic. My main hobby is football and I am quite fanatical about this. My two favourite games on the spectrum are *Match Day* and *Football Manager*. In his article, **John Minson** mentioned that there was one PBM game called *Football League* which involved managing a football team. This interested me greatly but no address or details were given. Can you help?

John Kelly, Islington, London

Two addresses of interest to football fanatics are: **Football League, The Mailbox, PO Box 3219, Bethlehem, PA 18017, USA** *($3 for rules and startup, $29.5 pays for an entire game) and* **G Whitty, 8 Wayside Mews, Maidenhead, Berks** *(SAE for details). There are some amateur PBM Football games: perhaps someone could enlighten me further with a letter?*

BK

STARGLOBERS UNITE

Dear Brendon,
I was interested to learn that CRASH had decided to produce a PBM page, and I'm very glad that they did! PBMing lets your imagination run wild: you can do almost anything you want. I enjoy the hobby very much and this means that I get very impatient waiting for my latest turn reports to be delivered!

At present, myself and a friend play in *StarGlobe Three*. My starship is called Nemesis, his *Bladerunner*. I think that the best way to play *StarGlobe* is to stay loyal to MONDE as you are less likely to be destroyed by Bounty Hunters — although pirates are a permanent threat to all decent and loyal starcaptains! In England there are regular player 'meets' (*where players get together for a chat* — **BK**) but here in Northern Ireland there is nothing like that. Could you suggest something to remedy this?

Finally, I would be interested to know which games you play in, and possibly the names you play under.

Gregory Quinn, Portadown, Co Armagh

Thanks for your comments and compliments: does anybody in Northern Ireland fancy organising a meet? As players of Starglobe Two *will agree, my personal approach to the game differs somewhat from your own . . . FLOSS-21ZNA9 (my flagship) is most certainly anti-MONDE! I also play in* Vorcon Wars 57 *and* Rebirth.

BK

DIY PBM

Dear Brendon,
Myself and several of my friends read your new column in CRASH and we found it so interesting that we decided to write to you to find out more about PBMing. We would like to start our own PBM game; about ten of us would like to take part and we were wondering what we would need to get started.

We would greatly appreciate it if you would give us some information on how to set up our own game.

Graham Souter, Cleethorpes

This is one of many letters on the subject of setting up a PBM game. 'DIY' games are of a common breed which I will discuss in a later issue, but for now I think that you should play some of the games already available and gain a deep understanding of the hobby before launching your own game. The first thing you need to get started, Graham, is some PBM experience!

BK



Part of a viewscreen printout generated by STARGLOBE, showing the situation in Space around you . . .

Reviews

LABYRINTHION

Producer: Budgie
Retail Price: **£2.99**
Author: **Ivan Horn, Andrew Deakin**

Labyrinthion features a magic scroll, a labyrinth (well that's a shocker), a hero, several baddies and a scenario that runs as follows:

Trapped within a dusty labyrinth you, as the hero of this fair tale, must escape with your life by avoiding the far from gentle touch of the cave's inhabitants. Troublefree travel within the subterranean passages is heavily restricted by doors that link the five sectors of the maze and require four objects to be in your possession before access is allowed. A quartet of compasses, maps or water bottles acts as a key to the doors between sectors, so your first main task is to hunt for these objects.

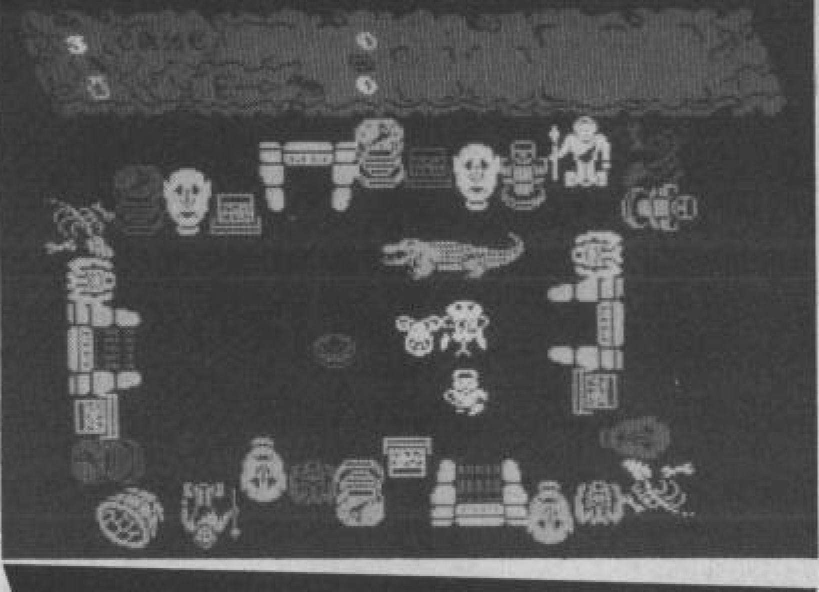
Lots of roaming evil beings troll from cave to cave in search of tasty morsels, and as far as they're concerned you are a very tasty morsel indeed. The action is viewed from above, as in *Wizard's Lair*, to which the game bears more than a passing resemblance. Swarming baddies constantly home in on you, sapping energy all the while. Their energy-sapping activities can be curtailed with a good old fashioned blast with one of the two weapons supplied.

Nine pieces of magic scroll must be neatly placed in your knapsack before they will obligingly point in the direction of the exit.

CRITICISM

● " **Graphically, this is** Wizard's Lair, **with the exception of Pothole Pete, and the flickering characters found in the labyrinth. Playability-wise, it's totally different:** Wizard's Lair **was great fun! The instructions are pretty good but aren't immediately readable. I couldn't find enough to do to make it challenging, and therefore I got bored quickly. General enjoyment, too, wanes after about ten minutes. The sound is well below par, and the tune on the intro screen is awful. Okay, okay, it's really cheap, but give me** Spellbound **any day. Take my advice and spend your money elsewhere.** "

● *" This game resembles* Wizard's Lair *and looks almost the same but with different monsters and a different man. Overall, I found the game fast and lots of fun to play. The graphics are well drawn and detailed, especially around the screen edges. Colour is well used and the sound is good and clear, with firing and getting killed noises. As more and more cheapo games come on the market, this is one of the better ones — I'd recommend it. "*



A range of nasties gather round as you hunt for the pieces of the magic scroll that reveals the exit to LABYRINTHION

● " After a spate of *Atic Atac*-ish type games before last Christmas the craze started to die down, but of course there is always the budget market. Budgie have published a relatively good product but it suffers from very bad collision detection. The colour is well used with lots around the outside and all moving characters of the same colour. I felt that the play area should have been increased in size by quite a bit as it only occupies about one third of the screen. The sound is very basic, just a few spot effects and a very bland tune to open with. I didn't much like the idea of the lives being eaten away with no gauge or indication of losing the lives. I don't think this will appeal to all of the adventure freaks but it is very simple and the price suits it right. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: K up, M down, Z left, X right, L fire, P pick up, V shield, S select, F change weapon, 5 pause
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: no problems
Use of colour: bright and cheerful
Graphics: a bit flickery
Sound: minimal — just a few effects really
Skill levels: one
Screens: 256
General rating: Not a bad game for the money



Use of computer	**60%**
Graphics	**59%**
Playability	**58%**
Getting started	**66%**
Addictive qualities	**59%**
Value for money	**62%**
Overall	**60%**

SPORT OF KINGS

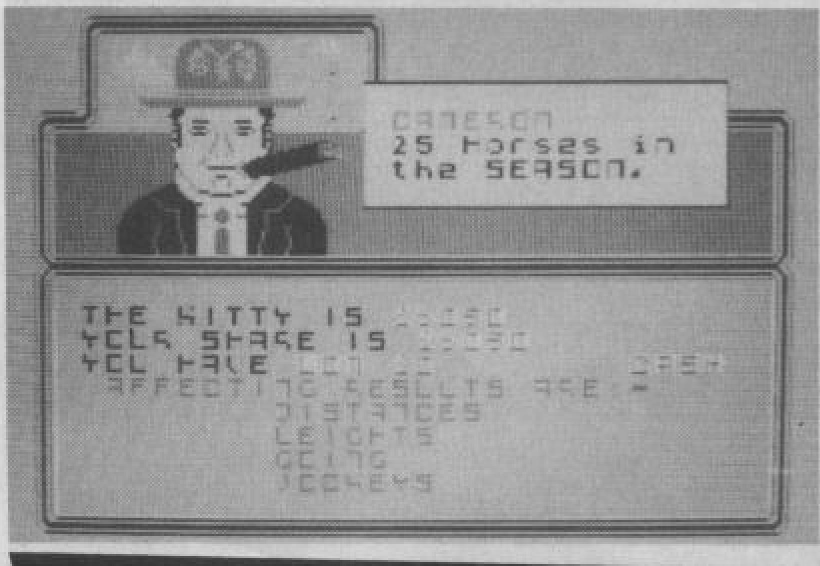
Producer: Mastertronic
Retail Price: **£2.95**
Author: **Jeff Calder**

Sport of Kings from Mastertronic simulates a day at the races. At the start you must decide whether the state of the course, weights of jockeys and distances are to affect the outcome of each race. The number of horses running each season is also in your hands. Obviously the more horses you choose the harder it will be to predict the winner. Each time the game is loaded the horses take on different 'personalities', so studying form is only relevant during a single season.

To begin with, horses have no form cards to check against so you can either run a few races blind or set the game to auto-run which builds up the form for you. Once you have gone through all the preliminaries, the game can be played for real. A menu screen with eight icons giving access to form cards, the line-up for the next race and the balance of your money — £200 is in the bank to begin with.

The race information icon accesses the line-up for the first race of the day complete with odds, distance and the going. Once a likely sounding nag has been selected, you can check its form card where all the usual information is logged. Then it's time to place a bet — on the nose, each way, straight forecast or a reversed forecast are all allowed.

The screen shows a race course with the horses lined up at one end and a commentator in a box in the top right hand corner.If you have a Currah speech unit you can also listen to the commentary. During the race the screen scrolls from right to left and furlong markers show how much of the course is left to run. When the finish line has been crossed, the results are displayed. and it's back to the bookies to claim your winnings or tear up your betting slip in disgust. The bookie is a mean-looking character with a cigar firmly clenched between his teeth — if you've lost he grins malevolently, but if you've won he looks very dangerous indeed.



HA HA! The bookie laughs as Cameron loses some money. Cam only got up to £6,050 by reloading the game every time he hit a losing streak!

CRITICISM

● " **This is quite a reasonable game — good value for £2.95. I'm not so sure about the BASIC in it though, because machine code could have got around the annoying and tedious 'please wait, I'm calculating' pause which comes up after each game. Up to five people can play, and the more people involved the more fun it is because the atmosphere is far better in a group. For the price, there's not much wrong with it. Not bad, but**



Clippity clop, the horses cross the winning line in SPORT OF KINGS

I'd rather MAD kept to the sort of quality seen in other releases like Spellbound and knight Tyme. "

● " *Most betting games are total trash, but Mastertronics usually come up with the goods. I'm afraid the game is a waste of time. This game is like one of the first budget games, in that it's slow to react to responses and contains very basic (literally) graphics. The icon control could have been very good but again it is let down by the slow BASIC calculations. I would suspect that* Sport of the Kings *could possibly be a fun if you loaded it up during a party and everyone had to use real money, but I'm afraid that's the only case when an appalling game like this could come in useful.* "

● " Horse racing isn't really my cup of tea, but after persevering for a while I began to enjoy placing my bets and watching the race, although the fun is limited. Placing bets, reading form cards and so on is very easily done with the icon/cursor set-up, so there isn't any brain ache remembering what key does what or how to get through the various menus. The graphics used vary from good on the main icon page to awful during the races. The sound effects are minimal; only the odd spot effect here and there. This might well appeal to racing fans, but I can't really see myself playing it for too long. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursor keys and 0 for fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: okay
Use of colour: simplistic
Graphics: nothing remarkable, simple animation
Sound: clippity clop!
Skill levels: one
Screens: main screen, animated sequence and form data
General rating: Not as polished as it could be, reasonable fun though

Use of computer	51%
Graphics	49%
Playability	55%
Getting started	53%
Addictive qualities	52%
Value for money	57%
Overall	**53%**

PODDER



Producer: Central Solutions
Retail Price: **£0.99**
Author: **GA Holmes**

Equipped with a futuristic tank, your task is to escape from a maze which is inhabited by all manner of nasties. Their job is to guard the various pieces of the Pod Monitor which you need to complete your mission.

Scattered around the maze are various useful objects which must be collected. The most important are the pieces of the Pod Monitor. Once all these have been stored in your tank, the Pod Monitor assembles itself and all you have to do is get your tank back out of the maze.

Although you are travelling around in a super-tank, you are by no means invincible. The nasties in the game present themselves as tanks similar to the one you are driving, or as long-legged spider-like creatures. These move around the screen at random and contact with them loses one of your five lives. If your tank remains immobile for too long, a mine is activated nearby. Fortunately, the tank is equipped with bullets and mines, and extra ammunition can be picked up along the way.

At the bottom of the screen the score chart records the points awarded for each object that is picked up in the maze. To the side of this, the number of mines and bullets in stock is shown. It is necessary to rearm quite often to avoid being overwhelmed by the enemy forces.

What sort of tank commander are you?

CRITICISM

● " **After a couple of goes,** Podder **starts to grow on you. The graphics are fairly good although they flicker a little. The playing area is a bit drab but the characters are nicely drawn. Soundwise, this game rates quite highly as there are lots of spot effects in it and a couple of tunes which are played on the title screen. The game itself would have looked pretty good a couple of years ago but it doesn't look too good compared with today's new releases. But then, for the price, fair enough!** "

● " Podder *is your average budget game. The graphics are highly detailed but small. The sound on the opening screen is very beepy but the tune is much more than I've come to expect from budget games. I found the game very easy to get into but I didn't feel that the instructions went into enough depth. The whole presentation of the game was well up to* MASTERTRONIC *level, and very impressive for 99p. I forgive* CENTRAL SOLUTIONS *for their previous efforts, and I just hope that they accept more games like this one.* "

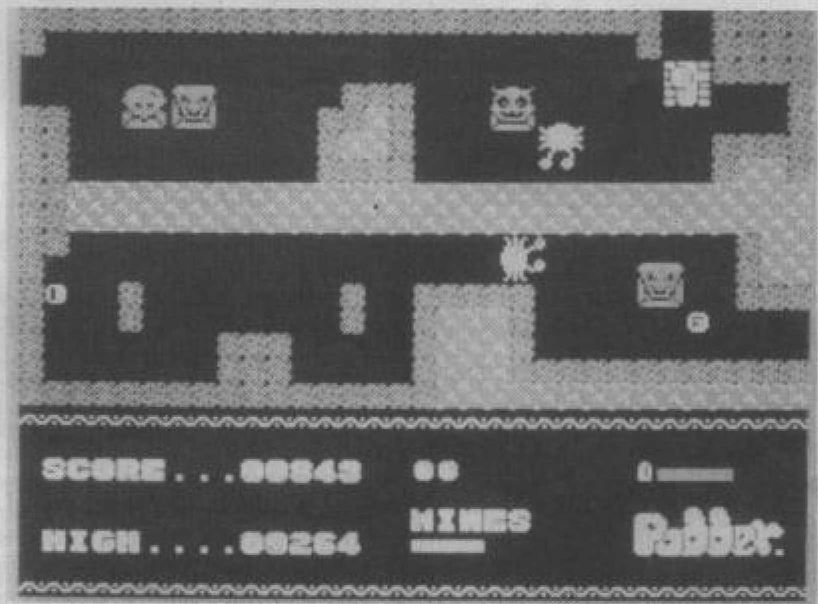
● " Compared with other games cs are marketing at the moment, *Podder* is much better than the rest. The tune at the beginning is quite merry, although a bit irritating after a while. It's easy to play and requires very little brain ache to actually get started. At the very worst, it's a harmless sort of game which will provide the player with a few hours of innocuous enjoyment before the novelty wears off. "

COMMENTS

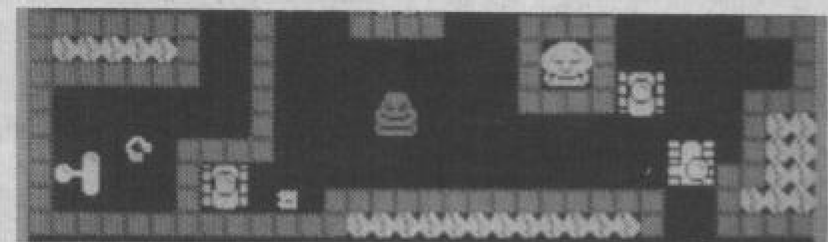
Control keys: Z left, X right, O up, K down, 0 fire
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: quite responsive
Use of colour: effective and attractive
Graphics: simple but effective
Sound: nice little ditty at the beginning and some cute spot effects throughout
Skill levels: one
Screens: mazes which get more detailed as the game progresses
General rating: Quite respectable, especially at the price

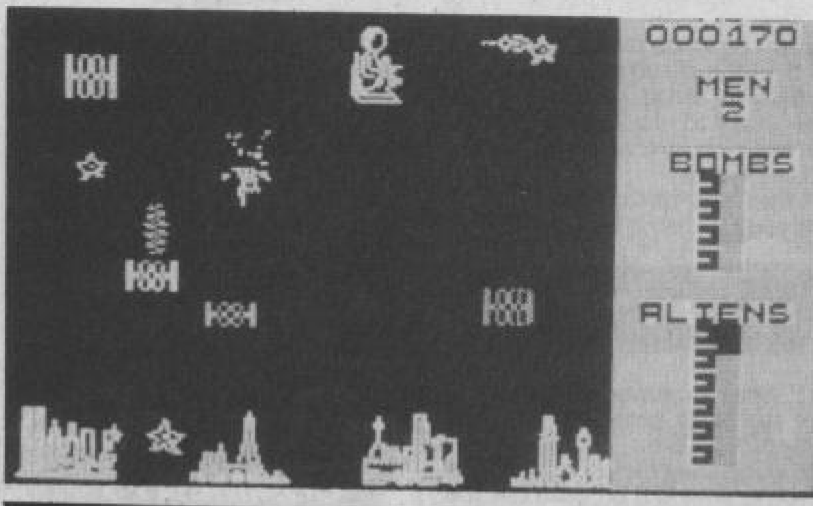
Use of computer	55%
Graphics	54%
Playability	55%
Getting started	54%
Addictive qualities	52%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**54%**

Cameron's tank gets some serious hassle from a long-legged spider. Will he be able to cross the river without getting caught?



Eeek, watch out for those marauding tanks! You've only got two lives left as well.





A nasty alien bites the dust, but watch out for that critter in front of you!

BARCHOU



Producer: Central Solutions
Retail Price: **£0.99**
Author: **Zafarullah Karim**

Those aliens are at it again! Why can't they leave civilisation alone? In this game, an intrepid spaceman has to prevent four cities from being obliterated by alien attacks. Single-handedly, he has to zip around and destroy the enemy's bombs before they reach the ground. The only way the nasties can be zapped is with a quick burst of laser fire. However, if your reactions are a bit slow, there is an explosion and the spaceman's atoms are spread evenly over a small area of space. Those multi-coloured aliens move at quite a pace!

Fortunately, the spaceman has five lives to play with, one of which is lost every time he gets too intimate with an alien craft. The game is over when all these lives have been lost or the four cities have been destroyed.

CRITICISM

● **" The graphics offer nothing vaguely interesting or new, just a few characters flickering around the screen. The sound is on a par with the graphics — a few spot effects here and there, but nothing special. Even for budget software this is a bad deal. "**

● *" The graphics are pretty awful, with some bad animation and grotty sound. Even for its cheapo price, the game is still pretty bad, as it's not very addictive. I wouldn't fork out for it and I wouldn't recommend you to, either. "*

● " As usual, CENTRAL SOLUTIONS are assuming that ninety-nine per cent of the people who buy this game are going to be psychic. There are no instructions with the game and it only becomes obvious what you have to do after several attempts at thrashing around unsuccessfully and getting killed a lot. The game is also so fast-moving that you need impossibly fast reflexes in order to get anywhere. The whole game seemed to be a case of whaaaaat hit me? "

COMMENTS



Control keys: Q up, W down, O left, P right, SPACE fire
Joystick: Kempston, Protek or AGF, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: basic
Graphics: poor animation
Sound: the odd beep and tinkle
Skill levels: one
Screens: one
General rating: virtually unplayable

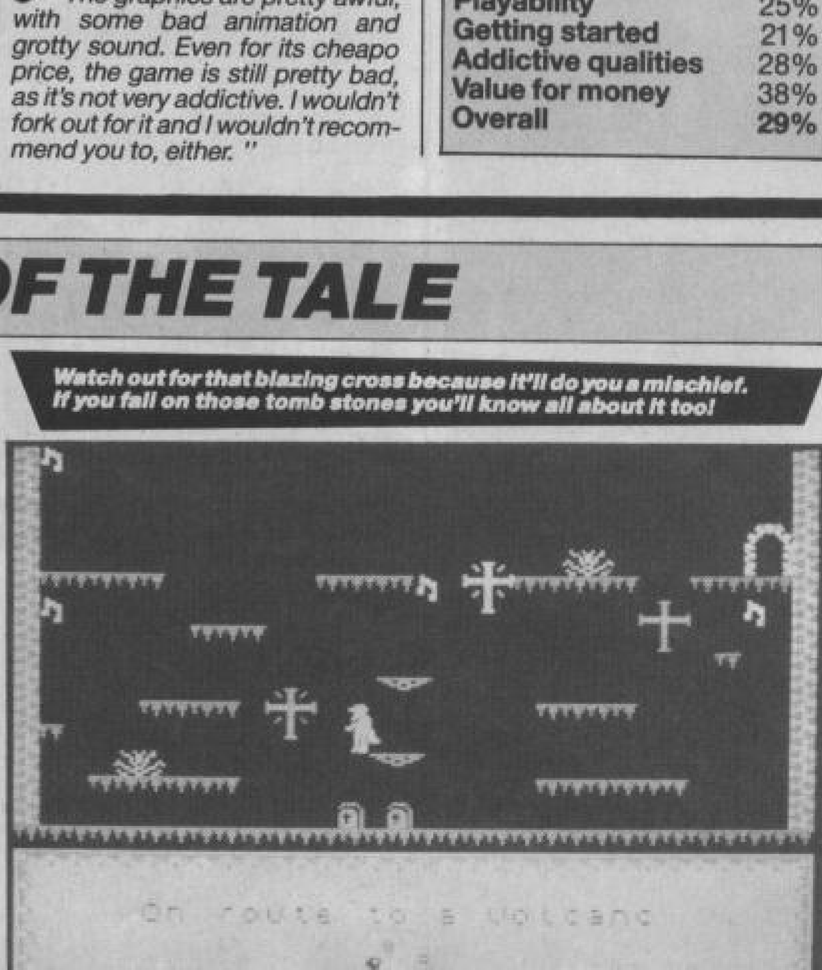
Use of computer	36%
Graphics	32%
Playability	25%
Getting started	21%
Addictive qualities	28%
Value for money	38%
Overall	**29%**

A TRICK OF THE TALE



Producer: Central Solutions
Retail Price: **£0.99**
Author: **G.A Holmes**

Watch out for that blazing cross because it'll do you a mischief. If you fall on those tomb stones you'll know all about it too!



This arcade game follows the explorations of a fearless little chappy towards a mysterious volcano. He must use his skill and judgement to navigate his way around the screens, picking up the coloured music notes as he goes. Each different screen must be cleared of notes before he can progress to the next one.

The caped hero stomps around the bottom of the screens, leaping into the air when necessary. In order to collect some objects, he must leap from platform to platform — not that straightforward as some of the levels move to and fro. Accurate timing is essential if our hero is not to tumble to his death.

One of his nine lives is lost each time the hero encounters a blazing cross or stumbles over a tombstone. He has unlimited energy, but must avoid the nasties to stay alive.

CRITICISM

● **" Gosh! Another** Manic Miner **clone! The graphics are pretty much the standard issue for budget games — a couple of nice characters, little flicker and lots of colour clash. Sound is minimal with only a few spot effects. Not exactly an original piece of software this but for its price one can't really grumble. "**

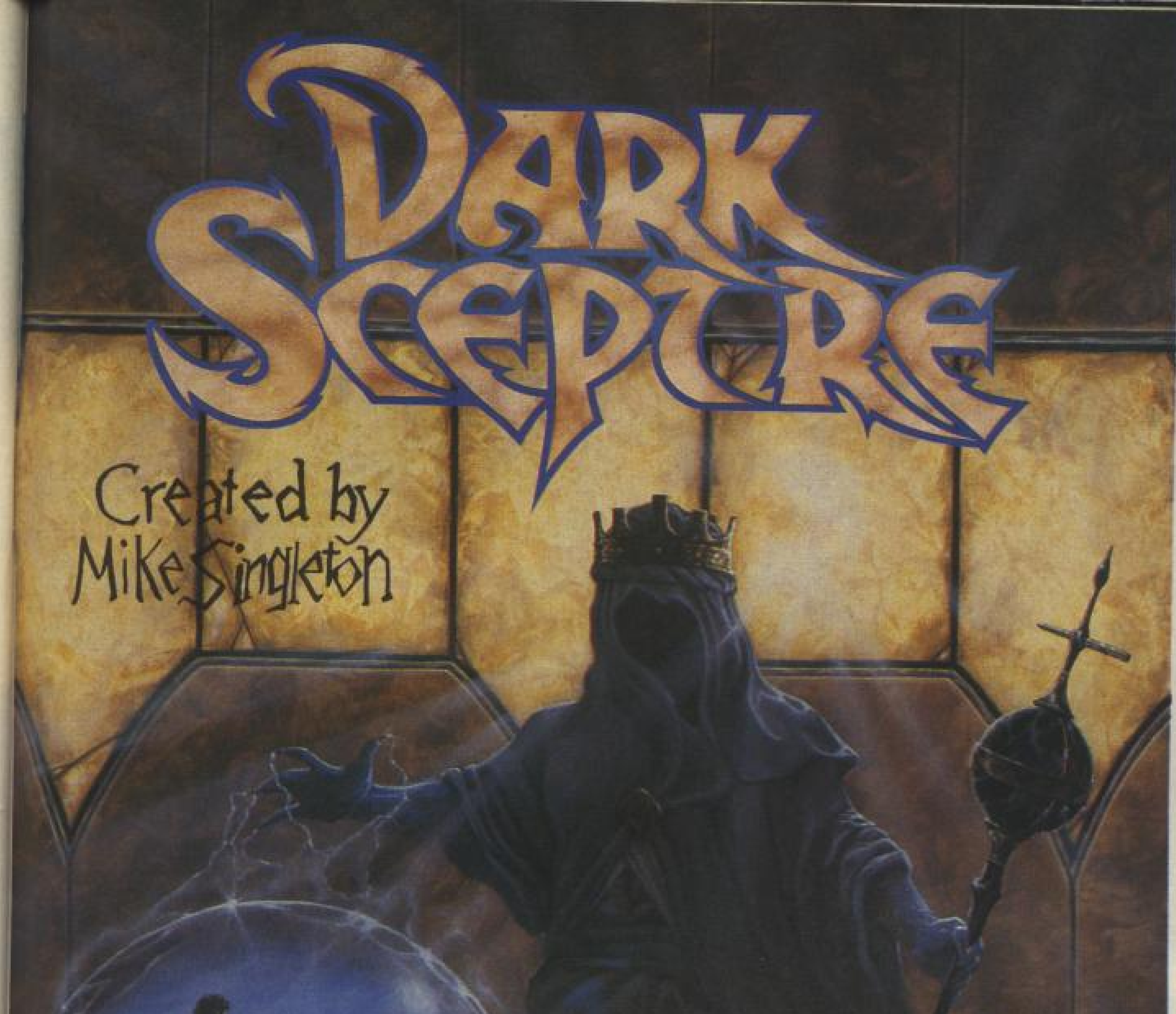
● *" The whole look of this game gives you a sense of very simple programming. The colour is well used and everything fits into its own little U.D.G. space perfectly. If you look at* A Trick Of The Tale *as a sixty pence blank tape and a forty pence game, then you can't go far wrong! "*

● " The graphics are less than reasonable and the sound is limited to the occasional bleeps and burps. To begin with, this looks as if it could prove addictive, but after a few goes it's very frustrating. Even at ninety-nine pence, this is not a game I would recommend. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: P start/pause, SPACE jump, Q left, W right
Joystick: no
Keyboard play: not bad, considering it's the only option you've got
Use of colour: quite a bit of colour clash
Graphics: less than reasonable
Sound: the occasional bleep
Skill levels: one
Screens: fifteen
General rating: An outdated platform game at a silly price

Use of computer	30%
Graphics	33%
Playability	28%
Getting started	39%
Addictive qualities	25%
Value for money	48%
Overall	**29%**



You are playing in a vast contest. All over the country hundreds of others strive like you to seize the Dark Sceptre. On microdrive cartridge you send us your commands and we return to you the latest news of your warriors — one episode in your struggle to power.

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An episode of Dark Sceptre is like a game in itself. Using our unique foresight-hindsight system, you watch action replays of events past, and then simulate the futures at your fingertips in "preplays" of events to come — all with stunning animation.

There are no deadlines but your own eagerness. You start a new episode, give fresh commands to your warriors. You rush to the door as the letter-box rattles a few days later. What's the news from the Western Isles? Have you won famous victories or have your warriors met their doom? You break open the seal...

All you need to play is access to a Spectrum microdrive (you don't have to own one). All you need to win are lashings of flair, nerve and audacity. The Dark Sceptre Play-By-Mail package includes:-

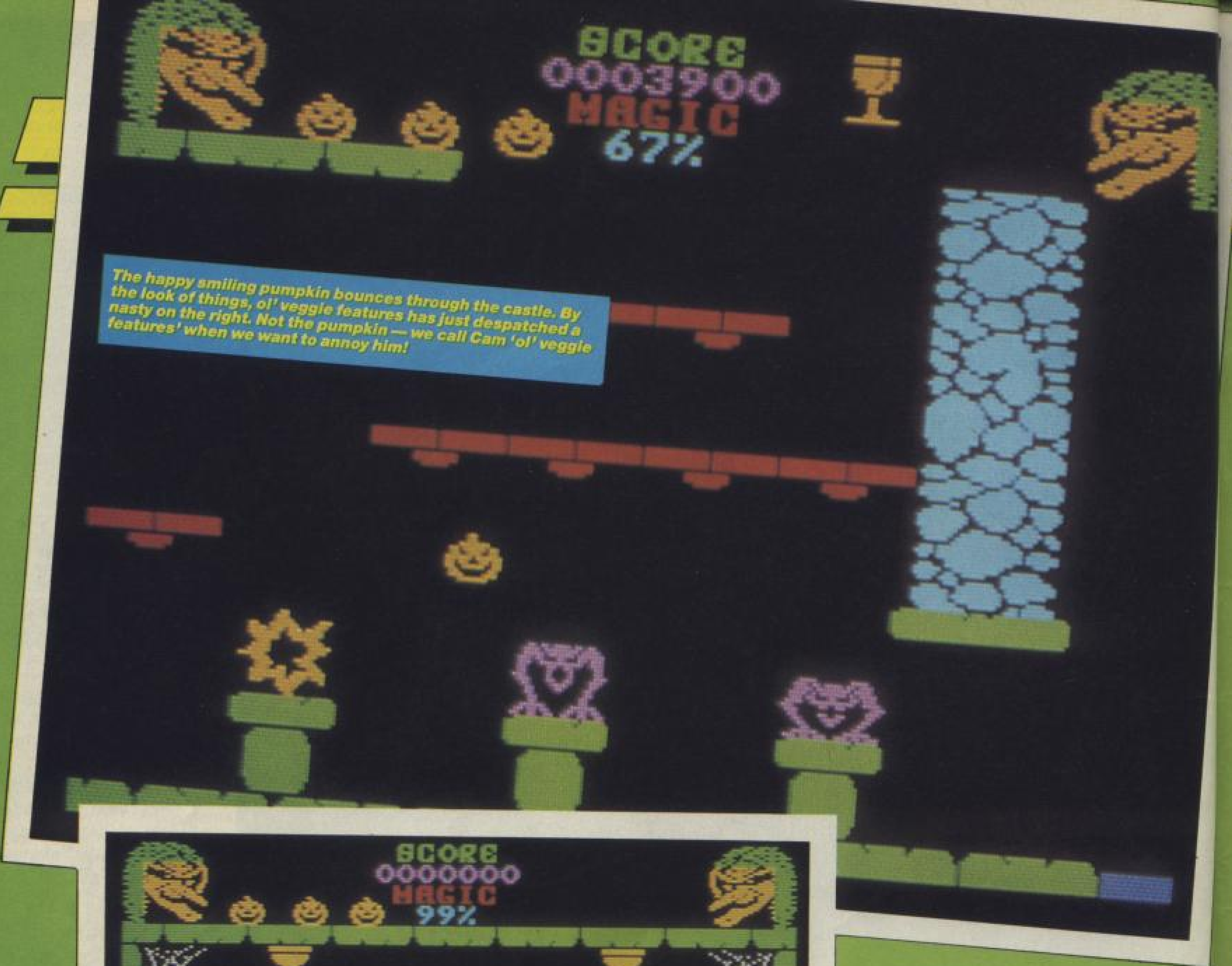
* **Master Cartridge**
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* **Coupon for 3 Free Episodes**

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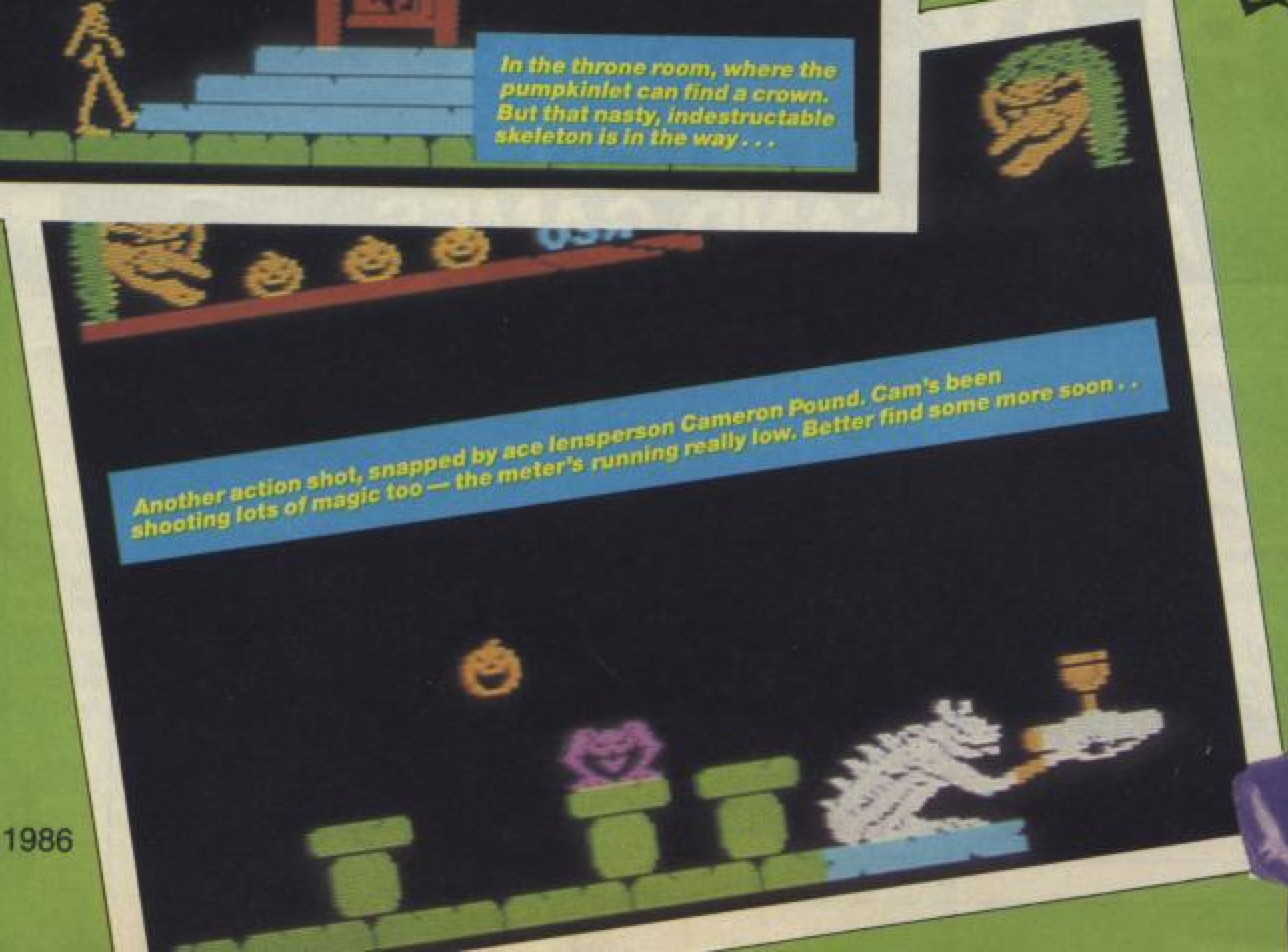
Please send me one DARK SCEPTRE Play-By-Mail Package.
I enclose a cheque/postal order for £14.95.
Please debit my Access/Visa Account No. ______________ for £14.95
NAME ______________
ADDRESS ______________



The happy smiling pumpkin bounces through the castle. By the look of things, ol' veggie features has just despatched a nasty on the right. Not the pumpkin — we call Cam 'ol' veggie features' when we want to annoy him!



In the throne room, where the pumpkinlet can find a crown. But that nasty, indestructable skeleton is in the way . . .



Another action shot, snapped by ace lensperson Cameron Pound. Cam's been shooting lots of magic too — the meter's running really low. Better find some more soon . .

C·A·U·L·D·R·O·N II

At the end of *Cauldron*, the wicked witch defeats the Pumpking and wins the Golden Broomstick. Flushed with victory (and a stack of newly acquired magical power) the witch takes up residence in the Pumpking's castle and moves her sidekicks in for company. All the fighting with the Pumpking has tired old witchy out, and now she spends most of her time tucked up in bed dreaming of world domination.

Little does she know, one of the Pumpking's minions survived her veggie clean-up campaign. Under cover of darkness this determined delicacy makes its way stealthily towards the castle with one objective in mind: to take the golden broomstick and claim the Castle in the name of all things round and yellow.

Although the wicked witch stays between the sheets, she has animated various objects within the castle to keep out undesirables. Floating mines, trolls with hammers and roasted pig heads which waggle their ears in anticipation and then pounce on intruders are amongst the army of horrors that awaits the little yellow fellow. Contact with anything that moves saps Pumpkin's strength, and when the magic meter in the status screen reaches zero he bursts!

At the start of the game, the hero is unarmed — bouncing into a pool of sparkling magic replenishes the magic meter and allows nasty-zapping to begin. Unfortunately, the canny hell-hag has granted her minions the power of immortality, and after they've been blasted with a bolt of magic they re-appear a couple of seconds later. Some guardians, like the patrolling skeletons and fluttering bats, cannot be killed with a magic blast — the gallivanting gourd can only get past them when a certain object is in the inventory. Gargoyles on the edge of the building harbour great magical secrets . . . misjudging a leap onto a gargoyle's plinth sends the little hero falling into oblivion with the witch's laughter ringing out loud.

Before the witch can be usurped, five objects must be collected and used at appropriate points in the game. The objects that Pumpkin Junior is carrying are displayed at the top of the screen along with the number of lives remaining. Points are added to the scoremeter each time a magical minion is zapped. Although the horrible warty hag is catching up on her beauty sleep, her evil spirit haunts the cobwebbed castle. When the veritable vegetable turns into pumpkin pulp she cackles hideously from her vantage point in the status area.

The smiling swede has obviously been doing some serious training for this mission, as he's an agile little fellow, full of bounce. Pressing fire increases the level of sproing — there are three bounce strengths. The pumpkinette roams around the spacious castle by bouncing along, and up and over the obstacles in his path. Careful timing is needed, for movement is effected by pressing left or right as the vegetable hits the ground. Fire and a direction pressed together while the full-fibre hero is in the air shoots a bolt of magic off in the appropriate direction.

Considering the dangerous nature of his mission, Pumpkin seems unreasonably happy about everything, with his crooked little smile and the glint in his triangular eyes. When all lives are lost, the game can be restarted — but the pumpkin sets out from one of eight randomly selected start locations, so getting to know the castle's geography is vital.

It is up to you to guide the Pumpkin rebel through the castle chambers, collecting and using items so the hag is destroyed and Veggie Power restored. Can you help the Pumpkin Strike Back?

CRITICISM

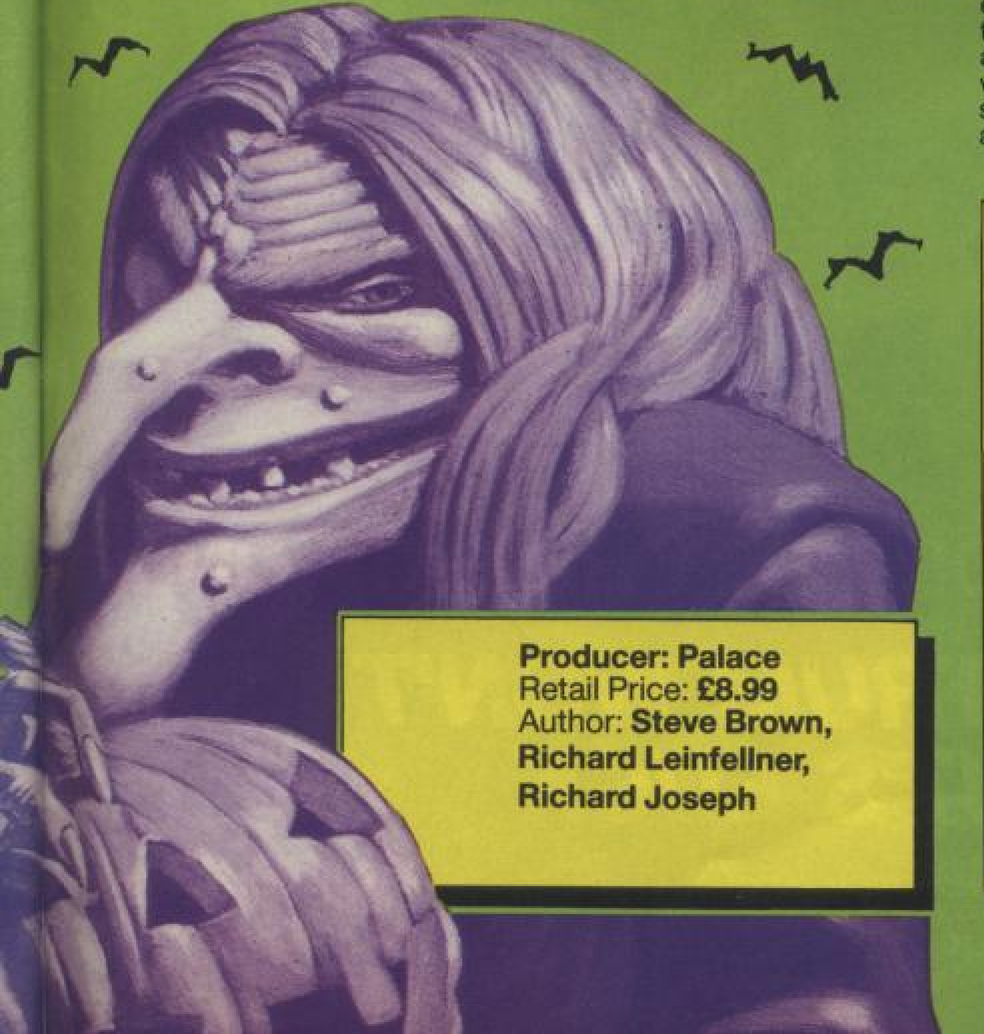
" At last us Spectrum owners get a chance at Cauldron II **— and what a good game it is. The graphics are superbly drawn and beautifully animated. The Palace team has managed to get a brilliant combination of lots of colour and limited attribute clash. The way the pumpkin moves around is superbly realistic. The tune on the title screen is excellent and well matched by the creative sound effects within the game. There are some very nice touches — like the way control is reversed when you hit a hand. Although the game is brilliant I think a lot of people will find it a bit hard to get used to, and a fair bit of effort is needed before you become a competent pumpkin controller. "**

CRITICISM

" Great! A brilliant arcade adventure which doesn't rely on the now rather worn and weary filmation style techniques. The game offers a lot more than its prequel and has one of the most novel control methods I've seen — bounce-ability, that's the beauty of Cauldron II. **The graphics are excellent with great backdrops and some of the best animated nasties I've seen in a long while. As for the game, well, it's by no means easy, but I feel that it merits a lot of perseverence and is one which you'll feel inclined to play and play. A very playable and addictive game that's well worth the money "**

CRITICISM

" The best thing about this game for me is the sense of reward you get when a task is completed, as the game is hard enough not to be a walk over but easy enough to keep you playing. The graphics are not as good as they might have been, but they are by no means bad or sloppy: there are lots of characters that move around nicely and the backgrounds are very well detailed. Sound-wise, things are pretty good — there are some great spot effects during the game and a smashing tune on the title screen. Cauldron II **needs practice to get into but once you've made the effort, I'm sure you'll find it rewarding. "**



Producer: Palace
Retail Price: **£8.99**
Author: **Steve Brown, Richard Leinfellner, Richard Joseph**

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very attractive
Graphics: clever animation, minimal attribute clash
Sound: very neat intro tune and spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 128
General rating: An addictive sequel to an addictive game

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	91%
Playability	93%
Getting started	86%
Addictive qualities	92%
Value for money	89%
Overall	**91%**

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HIJACK

Producer: Electric Dreams
Retail Price: **£9.99**
Author: **David Shea.**

This is the age of the terrorist. Hijacking has become ubiquitous and no-one is safe — now an unknown group has hijacked a vehicle and they're making demands. As Head of the Hijack Division, it's your job to track them down and negotiate, using whatever financial, political or military power you can muster. And all this within a time limit!

The game set within the Pentagon and there are a number of characters who can either help or hinder, depending on how you handle them. Most important of all is the President — he's the only one who can give you the boot. On the other hand, he might negotiate with the hijackers on your behalf (thereby extending the deadline) or even allow you to use his helicopter.

More information can be obtained from the FBI Agent, who can be made to question employees, at the risk of losing their loyalty. Intelligence work is carried out by the CIA Agent who provides reports of varying detail on the hijackers. Military and Political Advisers may be sent to the scene of the hijack to help the Political and Military Assistants, who are the real workers. They have the power to call upon diplomats to negotiate, or summon up troops to frighten the bad guys into surrender. Extra cash which might be necessary can be raised through the Finance Officer. Last but not least is the President's Secretary — she is really only accountable to the President, but you can order her to find an employee for you.

It is important that public support is maintained, and the services of the Publicity Officer are vital: good Press keeps the President happy. Remember, at any time he can send you a friendly little missive which goes something like 'You're getting on my nerves — you're fired!'

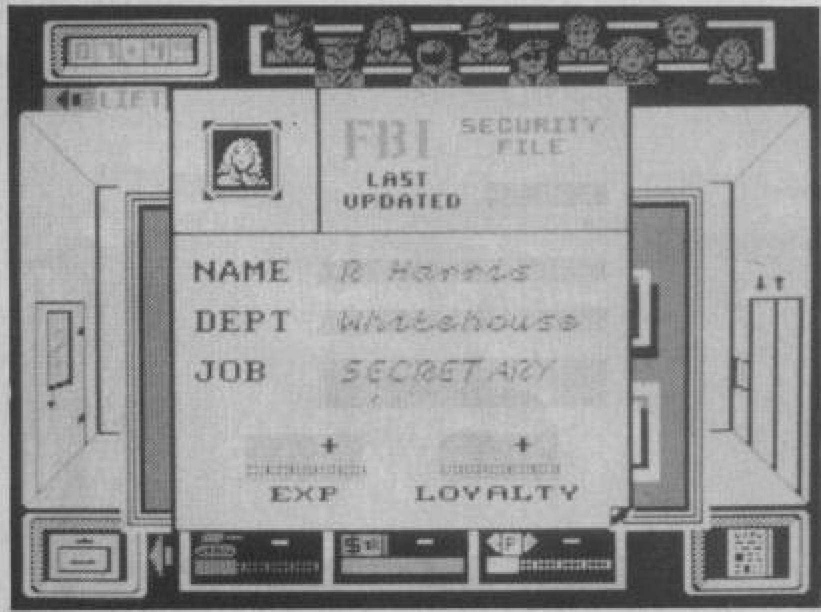


You travel up and down the Department building in the lift which links offices, and access options via a menu and icon system. Information, such as news headlines and top secret documents, can also be called up.

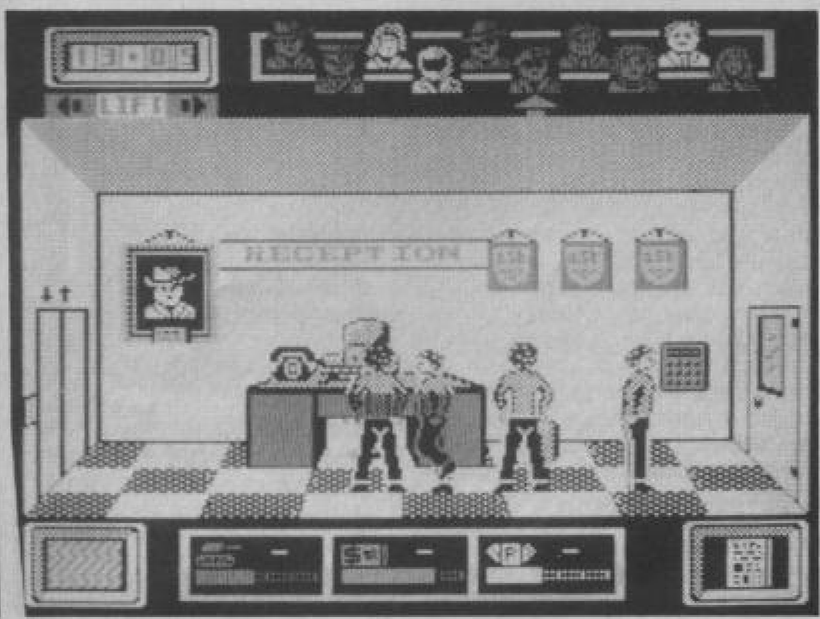
The faces of all the characters in the game are displayed along the top of the screen, and light up whenever you are in the same room as one or more of the characters. A clock slowly counts down to that dreaded deadline. Just below, is the lift sign with arrows pointing in both directions which light up to indicates that a lift is available. At the bottom left of screen, various items are displayed which you can pick up, examine or use on your way through an office, and the inventory is displayed to the right. A graphical readout displays your military, political and financial strength, which gradually diminishes as time goes on, unless support is won.

Once you feel confident enough to confront the hijackers, the President has to be found and a code word requested that gives access to the helicopter — certain items in the inventory may prove crucial in your negotiations.

Success depends on how quickly you can co-ordinate people and assimilate information. One thing, however, is certain. If you fail, expect the worst: an indefinite holiday in some remote Himalayan embassy perhaps? Happy mantras!



You get to have a quick peek inside an FBI security file. What an experienced and loyal person this R Harris is. Worth getting to know . . .



The Reception looks pretty crowded. Is that a picture of JR on the wall? Surely he's not been Hijacking people?

CRITICISM

● **" From my first look at** Hijack **I was hooked. The game is superb, the graphics are excellent and the controls are extremely well laid out and very easy to use. One thing I can say about** Hijack**, as opposed to many other 'good' games about, is that I got totally enthralled with the whole idea of the game. The way that you go about the offices and order everybody to do what they are told is superb, although I found you have to be nice to people if you don't want them to betray you. The icon-type control is very easy to use and very well presented. All of the rooms are well detailed — even down to the last little waste paper bin in the corner . . . Of course you have to check these for discarded paper and codes.** Hijack **is addictive from the first. I loved it; don't miss this very original game. "**

● " Hijack *is a very entertaining game. Although it took me a long time to get into the swing of things (possibly due to the fact that the instructions, although well written don't explain everything that they should) the game is still good fun. The graphics for the most part aren't particularly amazing, but they serve their purpose and could be a lot worse. The lift system is a bit of a pain and doesn't always go where you want it to, but perseverance usually succeeds. Even with its few downfalls, I can see myself wanting to play* Hijack *for a long time to come.* Hijack *is not as good as* Spindizzy*, but is an admirable attempt at a different sort of game. "*

● " This game is very boring to begin with, but once you start having some success with the various features it gets quite addictive. Initially, you can spend a great deal of time just going up and down the lifts not getting anywhere. Then everything seems to click and you find yourself totally intrigued. The graphics are good and the colour clash is minimal. The messages you receive from the various characters can be quite humorous, especially when you ask the President if you can use the helicopter. On the whole, I liked this game a great deal because it's one you can go back to again and again. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: :definable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface II, Fuller
Keyboard play: very good
Use of colour: lots of variety
Graphics: nice detailed graphics
Sound: realistic spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: large office complex
General rating: A very original and compulsive game

Use of computer	89%
Graphics	83%
Playability	90%
Getting started	79%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	83%
Overall	86%



Frozbie the dog has a little scorpion trouble — run away Froz! Wonder what's hidden in that chest . . . and the vase might conceal something useful too.

Thousands of years ago the god Xipe Totec reigned over the Sinu people in South America, bringing them knowledge and prosperity. However, he was a barbaric master, striking a cruel bargain with his worshippers. In return for his superior knowledge he demanded . . . BLOOD! Periodically, soldiers slaughtered some of the people of Sinu so the god could replenish his life source. Such was the power of Xipe Totec that the people of Sinu still believe in his presence. Many insist that he slumbers within his tomb, waiting for a sacrifice that will awaken him so his reign can continue.

Death and mystery surround the tomb of Xipe Totec — no one has ever returned from its clutches. Unperturbed by these stories, explorer Sir Pericles Pemberton-Smythe set out from England to excavate the tomb. Nothing has been heard from him since. Distraught with worry his daughter Daphne decides to investigate. With her fiance, Professor Kite, 'Legless' O'Donnell, a drunken hack from the Saturday Post, and Frozbie the dog, Daphne travels to Sinu. The game begins with the rescue party at the entrance of Xipe Totec's tomb.

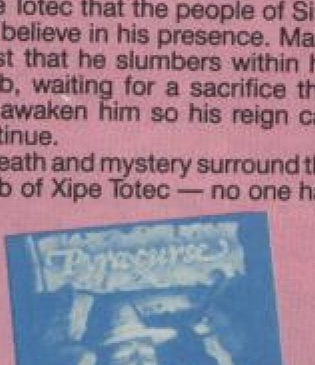
Xipe Totec is well protected. Headless guardians patrol the warren-like tomb, and unpleasant scorpions scurry around. If one of the exploration party gets too close, these mobile nasties give chase. Floating skulls terrorise the team and try to stop them entering certain areas of the tomb. Mechanical men and other hideous creatures await those who penetrate deep into the tomb. Contact with a nasty saps a character's energy and eventually leads to death, but all is not lost: reincarnating fluid, once found, can be used to restore life.

The characters in the game have different personalities: O'Donnell is a tenacious fellow, and the strongest member of the quartet; Daphne is good at finding things, and is a source of support when things are looking tough; the Professor can apply his superior intellect to find ways of using objects found in the tomb, while Frozbie enjoys nothing more than a good scrabble in the dirt — and often unearths useful items.

Pyracurse is controlled in much the same way as *Avalon*. Using the fire button, menus can be flipped through until you find the action you require. One character is controlled at a time, and he or she can either go solo or lead the other members of the party. If the main character is in Lead Mode, the others follow in a rather shambolic fashion. Each member of the party may carry up to three objects — objects can be picked up by moving onto them, although some artefacts can only be picked up by the appropriate character. A cursor control system allows objects to be used: once an object has been put on the screen it can be moved around.

The action is viewed in isometric 3D through a window on the screen, in such a way that you can see over walls into inaccessible areas while other locations are hidden from view. Full hidden object removal adds to the realism and the screen scrolls in all directions, with the character under the player's control remaining roughly in the middle of the playing area.

Daphne must find her father — she will be overjoyed if he is alive or very rich if he is dead, for she stands to inherit a considerable fortune. Are you ready to lead an archeological rescue mission?



Producer: Hewsons
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Mark Goodall and Keith Prosser**

CRITICISM

" Pyracurse is a good game, and if you're a big fan of Hewsons' Avalon and Dragontorc, you'll like this new game from a new programming team. Just wandering around looking for things is fun, but the size of the game makes it a daunting task to solve. The graphics are very good, with nice 'hidden view' effects, and the different abilities of the characters make the game more fun to play. This is a very different type of arcade adventure — but if you didn't like Dragontorc or Avalon, you might be disappointed. "

CRITICISM

" Pyracurse is a welcome relief from the usual arcade adventure type game. It's a smashing mixture of great graphics and excellent gameplay. The scenario is brilliantly interpreted by the authors. The characters all have individual personalities and you have to get them to work as a team if you want to get anywhere in the game. The graphics are of the usual high Hewsons' standards and scroll around the screen beautifully. The tune at the start of the game is a very loud two channel simulation — but during the game there are only a few spot effects. I'm sure the atmosphere — which is superb — could have been improved with a little tune throughout the game. Overall, I would say that Pyracurse is one of the most absorbing games around. Every type of games player will love this one. "

CRITICISM

" I was expecting a great deal from this game after watching it being played, but when I sat down to it on my own, I found it a little hard to get into. The graphics are certainly very good: there are well detailed backgrounds and 'moon walking' characters, but I was surprised to find that there was no view change control — it's possible to lose things behind walls. Playing the game itself is quite good fun but one feels a little awestruck at the huge task ahead. Generally, this game is quite hard to get into, but if you make the effort, it's a rewarding arcade adventure "

COMMENTS

Control keys: up/left A-G, up/right H-ENTER, down/left B-SPACE, down/right CAPS -V, Y-P fire
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: simple, but effective
Graphics: neat 3D effects, good animation
Sound: intro tune, plus spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling play area equivalent to 300 screens
General rating: A quality development on the 3D arcade adventure front

Use of computer	89%
Graphics	88%
Playability	89%
Getting started	84%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	87%
Overall	**90%**

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MERELY MANGRAM



A Staffer takes a peek at the comic which goes with the game of THE SACRED ARMOUR OF ANTIRIAD from Palace.

It's been a hectic month all round, what with completely overhauling my bicycle and cleaning the Hermes in readiness for new projects. For further details on the exciting developments that have been taking place, take peek at the News pages — I might even be able to invite you to a party!

There's no spare space to witter on here, so on with a look at the up and coming games. It's still a case of 'wait some more' for quite a few games that have become household names before getting anywhere near the high street, but there will probably be a flurry of releases at the PCW Show next month. I'm not sure I can cope with the crowds that such events attract, but might steel myself and turn up on one of the three trade days to find out what's happening for your benefit.

On a more positive note, Gremlin Graphics are romping ahead with the games they have in progress, and it looks as if *Trailblazer* is likely to be the first out of the bag. That's the game I mentioned last month with the scrolling chequered roadway and bouncing ball that Girlie Penn from ZZAP! was so impressed with when he stumped off to Sheffield with the Doc Martened one. No screenshots available yet, but next month, who knows?

David Martin from MARTECH made the epic journey from Pevensey Bay up to Ludlow the other day to show us a taster of the latest MARTECH project — not *WAR*, which is still a little young for previewing, but a judo game by the name of *Uchi Mata* is also underway. David hopes to have the game finished in time for the PCW Show and may well have a live judo demonstration running on the MARTECH stand — worth checking out if you are a beat em up fan.

US GOLD have secured the rights to a quintet of arcade games, including *Gauntlet*, *Express Raider* and *Breakthru* — no other news at the moment, but the CRASH/ZZAP! double act of Kidd and Penn have booked a trip down to London and should be able to bring full details in glorious colour back with them in time for next issue. During August, US GOLD plan to release *Silent Service*, *Desert Fox*, *The Sci Fi Trading Co* and their excellent Commodore golfing game, *Leaderboard*, but the arcade conversions are aimed at the Christmas market it seems.

The programming team at PALACE SOFTWARE is not resting on its *Cauldron II* laurels — the final touches are currently being put to *The Sacred Armour of Antiriad*. The mini-comicbook that introduces the game has already been printed. A copy has been passed around the office and voted "well smart" by the comic afficianados. News on the game as it becomes available . . .

The CRL crew have just sent us copies of *Dekorating Blues* and *Summer Santa*, two £1.99 releases due out under their ALPHA-OMEGA label. Both games involve scampering around large buildings, in the case of *Dekorating Blues* painting the outside while coping with a rival painting contractor's attempts to ruin your work — there are some rather nifty speech effects at the start of the game to keep you entertained. In *Summer Santa* the aim of the game is to deliver presents to all the members of a family without waking them up — which involves lots of to-ing and fro-ing as each present has to be collected from your grotto in a separate trip.

SUMMERTIME SANTA goes walkabout in the inky night, trying to deliver presents without waking the recipients up



Still no further news on *Ice Temple* from BUBBLE BUS, but with luck, we should be able to take a peek at *Moonlight Madness* in time for next issue. No promises, though . . .

Mark Strachan from DOMARK is another fellow who made the trip up to CRASH Towers recently — he brought the Commodore version of *Trivial Pursuits* with him, and promised that the official Spectrum version of the mega-popular board game would be a faithful copy of what we saw on Commodore 64 screen. The game involves no text input at all — very good idea — and is a faithful copy of the boardgame when it comes to gameplay. There's a neat little Master of Ceremonies character who stumps around the screen organising play, and the questions involve sound, music and graphics as well as text. We should have a bit of interesting news for you about a special question tape next month as well as details of an inter-magazine competition for a solid gold *TP* set, so keep your eyes peeled!

Finally, how could I avoid mentioning a few more details of DURELL's list of forthcoming releases, now I've been sent the press release in quintuplet! **Mike Richardson**'s next game is to be called *Thanatos* and is an arcade action number in which you get to play the role of an evil dragon who goes around duffing everyone up. Sounds fun.

Chain Reaction, like *Thanatos* is scheduled for a September release and is a 3D arcade adventure in which you have to penetrate a power station, kill off a bunch of terrorists and deactivate a time bomb. Chernobylesque, je pense comrade . . .

Later in the year, *Saboteur II* should arrive with *Killer DOS*, a game in which you take on the role of a debugging program, sent downline into a computer system to deal with a Killer Disc Operating System that threatens the integrity of the computer installation. November should see *Sigma Seven* in the shops — a seven-level arcade adventure/shoot em up, while *Deep Strike*, the follow up to *Combat Lynx* is expected in time for Christmas.

MERMAID MADNESS

Myrtle the amorous mermaid is in love! The object of her passion is Gormless Gordon, not yer most intelligent of divers. Still beggars, or even fat mermaids, can't be choosers. And so begins the wet pursuit, in this, the latest game from ELECTRIC DREAMS.

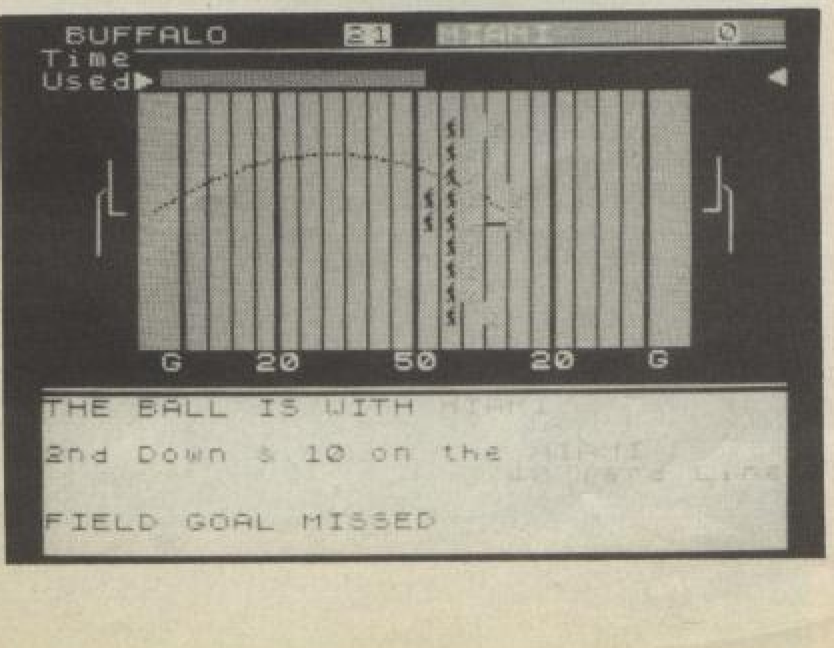
Overcome with desire (or is it terror?), Gormless Gordon plunges into the murky depths and is lost from sight. Myrtle dives in, in a desperate attempt to find him before his air-bottle runs out. Being a bit of an alkie, Myrtle sustains herself by partaking of a stout or two — part of the cargo from the shipwreck impaled on the rocks beneath the water. She must also pick up any air-bottles along the way, which can take to her unfortunate lover, who is lost in the underwater maze.

Myrtle must also be careful to avoid the nibbly nasties that patrol the waters. Should they get their pincers into her nether regions then all is lost, and poor Gordon is doomed to die!

Still, at least she knows when she's getting near to her prize because her heart, displayed at the top of the screen, beats faster and faster. But if she doesn't reach him in time, at least she's had a good time getting there!

AMERICAN FOOTBALL MANAGER

The action screen in HEAD COACH: The Buffaloes play Miami and seem to be doing quite well . . .



Following the long running success of *Football Manager*, ADDICTIVE have come up with *Head Coach*, an American Football simulation. As the person in charge, it's your job to take a team to the very pinnacle of success which, in transatlantic terms, means winning the prestigious Superbowl!

To achieve this, your team must win a sufficient number of games during the twelve week season to qualify for the play-off section. If you get through that, and then the first round and 'conference' championship which follows, your team has made the final, playing for the Superbowl Championship.

Initially, you choose a team from the twenty four available. Teams are split into six divisions, each division containing four teams. Each of the three teams in your division has to be met on the field twice — if you're a novice or 'rookie' the play is less demanding that at veteran level, where the skill of the opposition is greater.

Before the game, the first task is to pick the members of your team, bearing in mind any injuries to the squad and the respective strengths of your team and the opposition. On the day of the game the condition of the pitch and the direction and strength of the wind also have to be considered. The match is displayed onscreen with animated graphics, and a bar which extends to indicate the amount of time that has elapsed. During the match, you direct play from the sidelines choosing one of the moves indicated at the bottom of the screen. At the end of a match the final scores in the other matches are flashed on screen with the league tables. A news item is also shown detailing any relevant information: injuries, retirements, new training methods and so on. At the end of the season you can review your squad, getting rid of any weak players and buying new ones from the College Draft.

Only three teams have ever won the Superbowl three times in a row — could you coach a team to the Hat Trick?

IN THE HEWSON'S PIPELINE . . .

It's action stations at Chateau **HEWSON** — they're certainly not resting on their **Pyracurse** and **Quazatron** laurels. . . .



FIRELORD

Steve Crow, author of **Wizard's Lair** and **Starquake** is currently slaving away over a hot Spectrum keyboard, putting the final touches to his latest game, **Firelord**, due for release by **HEWSON** at the end of October. The game has a mediaeval setting and you take on the role of Sir Galaheart, a chap intent on making his homeland a happier and more pleasant place to be. The evil Queen has tricked the resident dragon into parting with the Firestone, and now has the ability to hurl fireballs across the land of Tarot. The people are terrorised and downtrodden, and what is needed is a hero.

Up steps Sir G, who begins the game with the status of Peasant and progresses through the social heirarchy, passing through the ranks of Serf, Squire and Overlord on the way to becoming Firelord as he achieves success in the social strata. The baddie queen has agreed to relinquish the Firestone if someone can give her the secret of eternal youth — which is held by a spell that has been split into several elements. Find the components of the spell, link them together and present the Queen with her wish and the game is completed. Tarot becomes a nicer place and there's every chance the voluptuous Princess Eleanor will agree to take your hand in marriage.

Wandering round Tarot, you come across buildings — taverns, shops and so on, and when Sir G goes into a building an icon driven subgame has to be played. The owner of the edifice and Sir Galaheart can barter for items they possess — should the inhabitant be unkeen to trade for a useful object, the hero can always wait for an appropriate moment and try to pinch something. As in real life, the consequences of being caught shoplifting are dire. . . . Of course, there's the usual gang of nasties lurking around the place — not all of them real. Sir G has to decide whether ghosts are real or imaginary, for instance, and act accordingly.



THE BLUE RIBAND GAME

Richard Branson, head of the **VIRGIN** Empire is no doubt well chuffed that he managed to beat the record for crossing the Atlantic in his boat *Challenger II*. Pity the Americans are sulking and refusing to let him have the trophy . . .

Never mind Richard.

Now you can enjoy some of the thrills and spills of racing across the ocean against the clock, with a new game from Mr Branson's software company. *Atlantic Challenger* the Spectrum game should be in the shops by the time you read this — all the action takes place aboard the Branson boat which zooms along at a fair old lick while you deal with the little day to day problems encountered in crossing the Atlantic at high speed while trying to keep a business empire afloat at the same time.

Looks like an interesting variant on the strategy/simulation front — we should be taking a closer look at the finished version of the £7.95 game next month.

CITY SLICKER

Meanwhile, in the fair city of Lincoln, **Steve Marsden** and **David Cooke** — the fellows behind **Technician Ted** and **Costa Capers** are about to finish work on their new game, **City Slicker**, which is set for release in the third week of September.

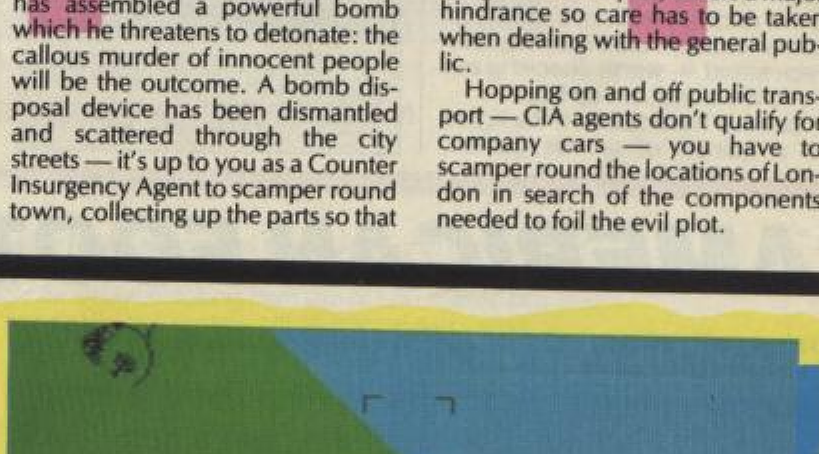
The game is set in the streets of London — the city is under threat from evil villain Abru Cadabra who has assembled a powerful bomb which he threatens to detonate: the callous murder of innocent people will be the outcome. A bomb disposal device has been dismantled and scattered through the city streets — it's up to you as a Counter Insurgency Agent to scamper round town, collecting up the parts so that the equipment may be assembled and used to foil the dastardly plot.

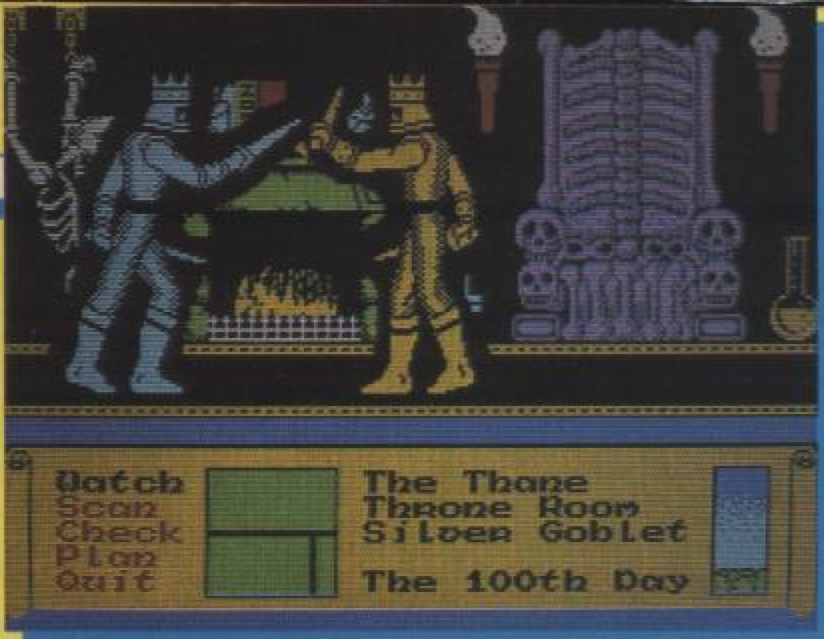
The map of the game is based on the real map of London — albeit a slightly cut down version. There's no way hundreds of square miles of city streets can be crammed into the memory of a humble Spectrum! On the quest, you encounter a variety of citizens, from policemen to yobboes and members of the Royal Family. Some of the characters in the game are helpful, others a major hindrance so care has to be taken when dealing with the general public.

Hopping on and off public transport — CIA agents don't qualify for company cars — you have to scamper round the locations of London in search of the components needed to foil the evil plot.

COULD YOU BE AN AWAT ACE?

The combat flight simulator, *ACE* from **CASCADE GAMES** has finally arrived in its Spectrum incarnation. The game went down very well on the Commodore, and looks set to impress Spectrum users. *ACE* requires you to fly sorties against enemy forces in a last bid to prevent invasion. One player can fly solo, or a second person can board the AWAT (All Weather All Terrain) plane and take charge of the weapons systems. Full review next issue, promise.





A pair of Thanes slug it out in a throne room — part of Mike Singleton's latest game DARK SCEPTRE which is rapidly nearing completion

THE DARK SCEPTRE APPROACHES

A couple of months ago, we took a look at MAELSTROM'S *Dark Sceptre*, the game **Mike Singleton** is currently working on which set in the Isles of the Western Sea. As the launch date is rapidly approaching, we thought it would be a good idea to see what development there had been since we last spoke to Mike back in May.

Just to refresh your memory, *Dark Sceptre* is based on that never-ending story: the battle between good and evil. The object of the game is to stop the Dark Sceptre falling into the hands of the nefarious Shadow Lords. In one of the scenarios that Mike sent us, two Thanes — Thanes are leaders of the warrior bands — are seen in combat in one of the throne rooms. As the screenshot reveals, the characters are huge — the animation and sound are excellent, with real 'clash of steel' noises emanating from the humble beeper on the office Spectrum.

In the game, you have to recruit a team of characters who embark on a quest for the Dark Sceptre. Eight different type of character are available, each with a specific set of qualities and capablilities and selecting a team is a vital component of successful play.

Two versions of the game are being produced, one a stand-alone game that will be marketed by BEYOND and a Microdrive based Play by Mail version which Mike will be running. In the PBM version of *Dark Sceptre*, two modes of display are available. Replay makes it possible for a player to see what has happened in the game since his last turn, while Simulation shows what might happen if particular orders are carried out.

MAELSTROM is currently putting the finishing touches to the game. As Mike said, "we're really at the stage of putting the jigsaw together." There are about four to five thousand screen-fulls, and in the Play by Mail game, many more. Bits have been added, and there is a four channel sound routine, which "isn't bad for the Spectrum," said Mike. Expect to see the stand-alone game in the shops soon . . . we should be bringing you some interesting news about the PBM version in due course.

WEAPON GUARDING MINION GOES SOLO

The new game written by **Graham Stafford** of DESIGN DESIGN goes under the name *Nemesis*. The scenario follows an interstellar battle between the Andromedan forces and mother Earth: after years of stalemate in the war, Earth's commanders decide to attack the Andromedan's lifeline — the Hyperspace route between Andromeda and Orion which supplies the Andromedans with the materials essential both to their existence and the continuation of the conflict.

In order to mount the attack, Earth's forces have to invent and build a totally new type of weapon. The weapon project, code named *Nemesis* because the development work was done on the planet Nemesis, eventually comes to fruition and a conference is organised on Earth to decide how the new super-weapon should be deployed. All the Big Cheeses on the Nemesis staff potter down to Earth for this prestigious event, leaving the Nemesis production plant in the hands of the minion workers and one largish cheese who had decided he could do without another boring conference.

Spotting their opportunity, the Andromedans swoop in on the undefended planet and wipe out everyone, save a sole Nemesis worker who suddenly realises that there is only one thing to do. Whatever happens, the Nemesis weapon must not fall into enemy hands.

Which is where you come in, playing the part of the sole survivor. The ten modules that make up the weapon have been scattered around the research complex on the planet and they must be located and transported down the Matter Transfer Beam to the nearest Earth space ship. However, the MTB has a small fault and this must be fixed before the modules can be transferred to safety. There is also the question of the blue prints. Even if the Andromedans totally destroy the Earth base on Nemesis, the blue prints for the weapon might survive and fall into enemy hands, owing to their protective covers. Apart from these little difficulties, a platoon of Andromedan combat droids is invading the complex and they're after the components of the super weapon too. Time is running short . . .

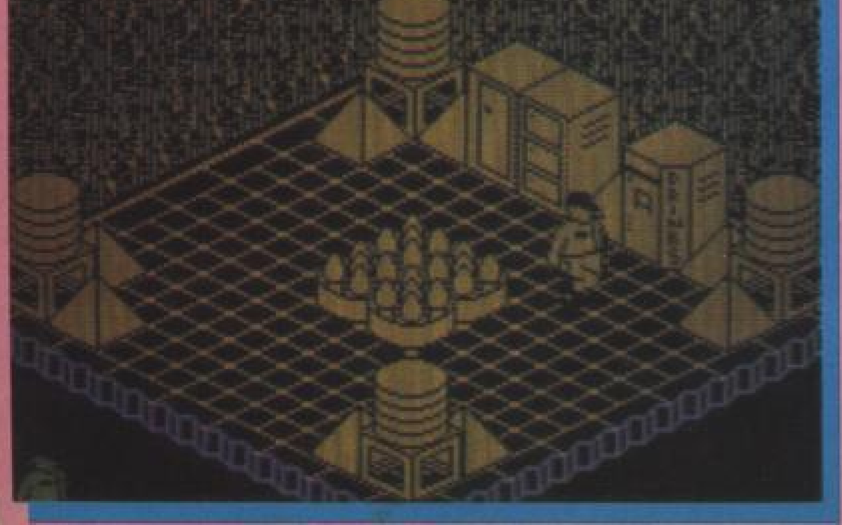
The game is played across a 3D landscape split into rooms, and a at first glance might appear to be just another *Alien 8* or *Batman* clone. Graham Stafford is convinced that the finished game will not only play much faster than its predecessors which share the 3D format, but will prove much more tricky to solve. Each room is designed as a puzzle in itself, and a fair bit of thinking as in combination with arcade skills will be needed to complete the game.

An August release is on the cards — as usual, we'll be carrying a full review as soon as possible.



NEMESIS Minion wanders through a blue room in Graham Stafford's latest game — could be a workstation by the looks of that computer against the far wall

Your overalled character stumps through one of the locations in NEMESIS, ignoring the lure of a drinks machine, he carries on with his quest to save Earth's super-weapon



PREVIEW

STEELING YOURSELF FOR THE ACTION.

Ricky Steel is the new teenage super hero from **MIKRO-GEN**, and his first shot at stardom comes with the release of *Stainless Steel*, a slick shoot em up programmed by **Dave Perry**. With the aid of an amazing flying car and a robotic arm that takes the place of a limb lost in earlier conflict with the forces of evil, Ricky has to save the world from the dastardly Dr Vardos and his remote controlled android army.

The screen shows a bird's eye view of the action with the landscape scrolling downwards through a central window. On either side of the main window status areas keep track of Ricky's health, weaponry and score. Ricky has four difficult terrains to fight his way through, avoiding obstacles as he goes and destroying the androids sent by Dr Vardos to turn Ricky Steel into Ricky Scrapmetal.

There are four sections to the game — the preview copy was missing the final level where the confrontation with Dr V takes place. In the first section Ricky is on foot, and stomps along a street searching for his super-car. High above him swoop the minions of Dr Vardos. Helicopters from the evil doctor's arsenal fire homing missiles which must be avoided, naturally enough. If Ricky can make it to the barrier at the end of zone zero intact he can leap into his shiny new motor and take to the air for zone two.

Once airborne in zone two, Rick's task becomes a bit easier — but not much: fuel has to be collected to keep the car going. His motor is equipped with a neat set of laser cannon and is a very manoeuverable beast indeed. Travelling over a hostile desert terrain, Ricky has to avoid and destroy helicopters, fighter planes and homing missiles which have a nasty habit of zooming down the screen, disappearing from view and then turning round and attacking from behind.

The third zone is fought over a watery channel — fortunately Ricky's motor is amphibious, and can scoot along the surface of water as well as drive and fly. Submarines surface sinisterly for a couple of seconds before sinking back into the murky depths again, and those fighter planes just refuse to give up. Ricky Steel's super-car has been kitted out with an impressive weapons system and with some careful blasting it should be possible to make short work of the flying nasties. The submarines have to be despatched with well-aimed depth charges.

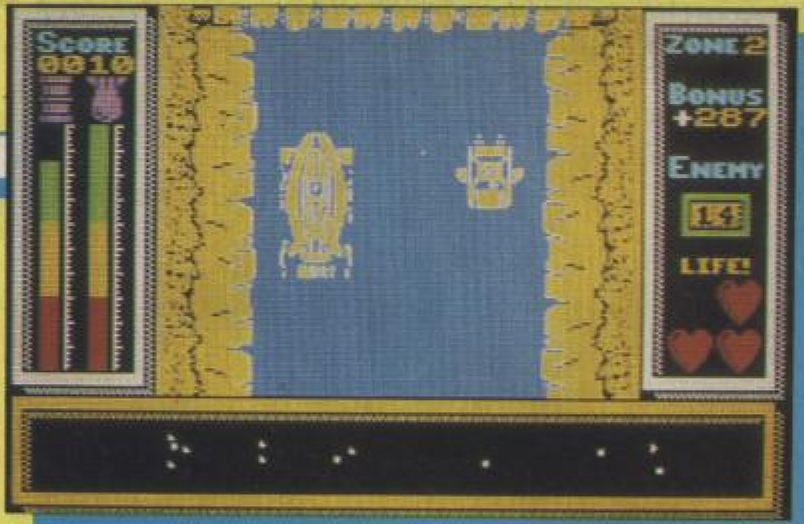
Ricky Steel has four lives in the game. One of these lives is lost every time the enemy scores a direct hit on the car. When this happens there is a nasty noise and Mr. Steel's wonder car explodes in an impressive mass of twisted metal.

When the game is complete, a fourth section will have to be negotiated where stomping lizards and scuttling salamanders join forces with Dr V's metal minions in the final confrontation.

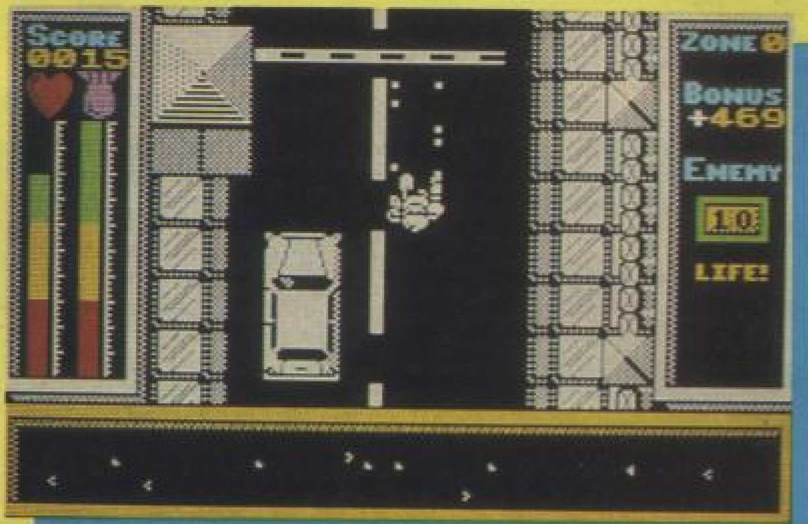
The radar at the very bottom of the main screen displays the position of all the nasties on the current level as well as Ricky's position. At present, the display is a little confusing, but further refinements are in progress. A meter on the right of the play area indicates the number of nasties that have to be eliminated before the zone can be completed, and ticks down as the baddies bite the dust. Bonus points are awarded for each android zapped — and bonus points are lost if baddies remain on the clock when Ricky exits a level.

In the final version of the game, which bears a passing resemblance to *Spyhunter*, force shields should help protect Ricky and make the game play easier. Some of the aliens are likely to reappear after they've been blasted, and the fire patterns of Ricky's personal and in-car armoury is due to be tidied up before the final version is released at £8.95 in a few week's time.

Ricky Steel, teenage superhero, is going to be the star of quite a few **MIKRO-GEN** games over the coming months — plans are afoot for a whole series of scintillating software. Meanwhile, should you wish to meet a metal armed superhero in person, nip down to the PCW Show next month where Ricky and his mechanical arm will be signing autographs!



Ricky motors along on the right of the screen while a submarine pops up from the murky depths. Zone Three of STAINLESS STEEL



It's mean on the streets, especially when Dr Vardos has sent his minions after you and you can't quite remember where you parked the car! Guns blazing, Ricky approaches a barrier in the roadway

FIGHTING THE COMPUTER

A veritable master computer has thrown a wobbly. TUJAD has more than a mere microchip headache — it's about to blow up Space, in a very big bang indeed.

The only hope for all living creatures is vested in GEN 19, an amazingly sophisticated combat droid equipped with a hover pad for transport, a general purpose gun, three grenades, three disabling discs that can be used to shut down sections of the computer and three smoke bombs.

Zooming round the hundred-odd screens that make up the playing area in *Tujad*, you have to find fifty sections of a circuit board which then have to be taken to a assembly points, put together and used to repair the faulty Sub Processor Element which is causing the Ultimate Headache that threatens the very existence of life itself.

Extra lives and energy can be collected on your travels, and a panel at the top left of the screen shows how things are going while a large message area on the top right flashes up reports during play.

The game was written by the team at **ORPHEUS**. Now that the company has changed direction and become a programming house rather than a software publishing company, *Tujad* will be marketed by **ARIOLASOFT**. Priced at £8.95, the game should be in the shops during September.



An action screen from an early version of TUJAD. GEN 19, the blue guy on a hoverpad, does battle with a giant whirling



"More Arcade Classics from the Arcade Masters"

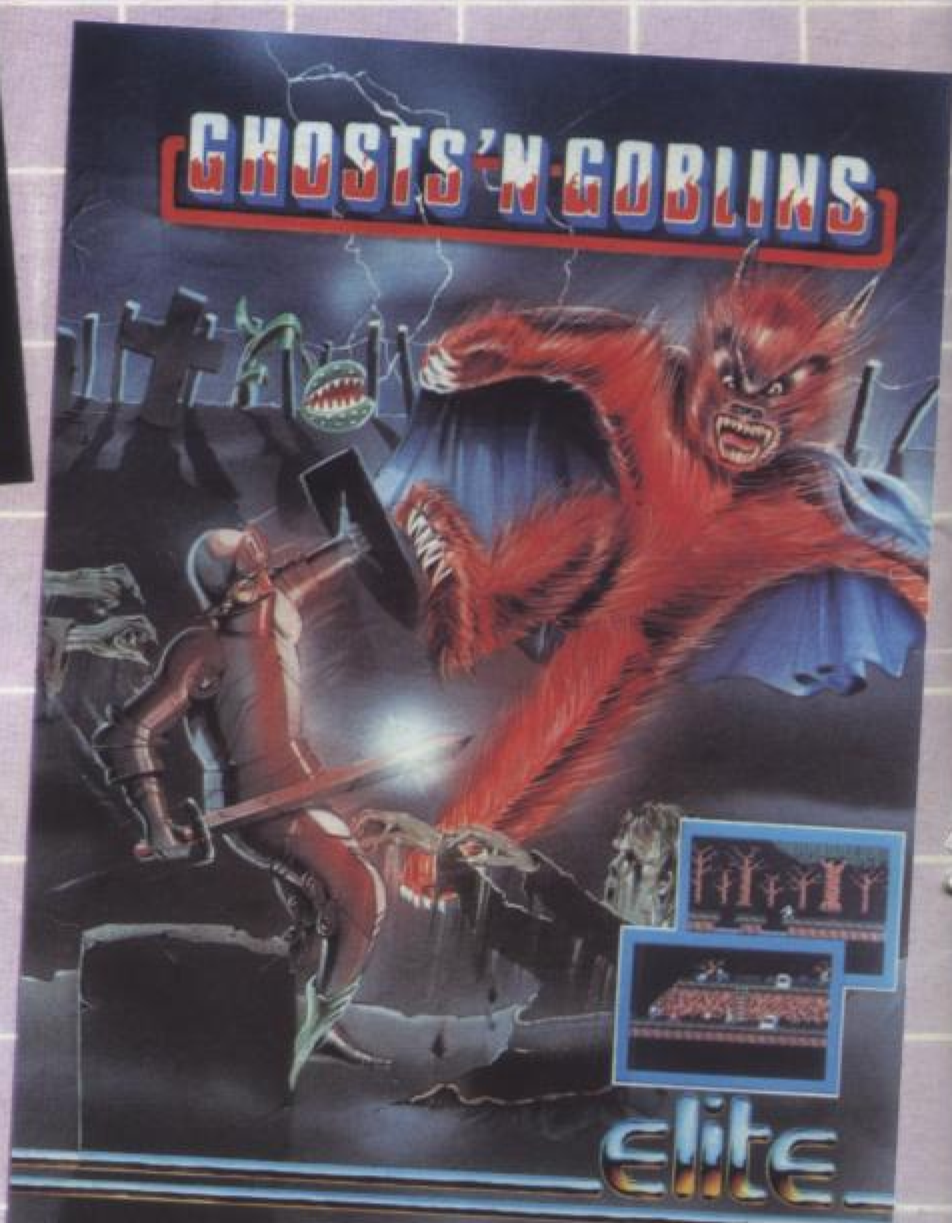


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